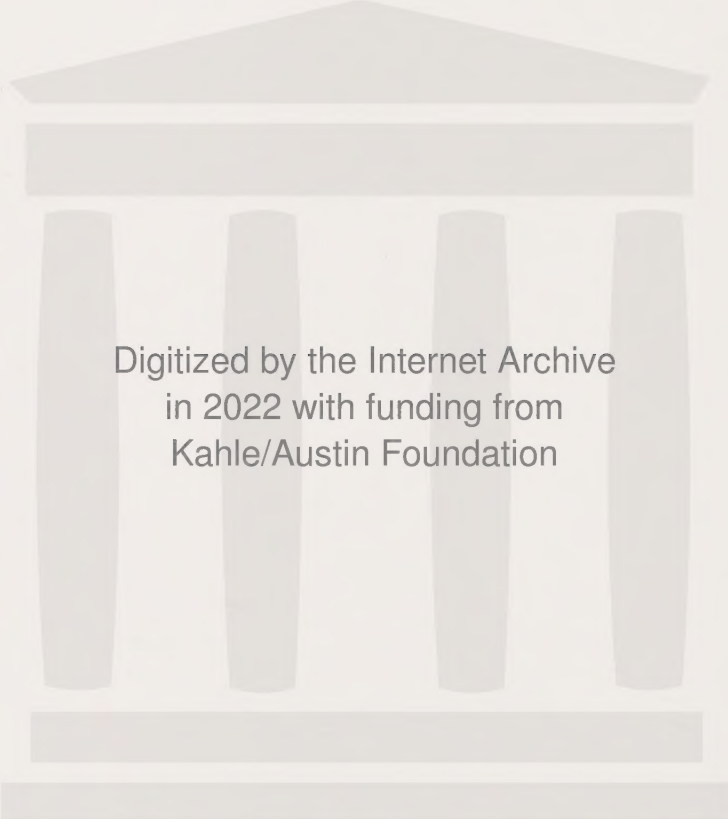


Max Giovagnoli

Transmedia Way

The Storytellers, Communicators
and Designers' Guide to the Galaxy





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THE TRANSMEDIA WAY

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A Storytellers, Communicators and Designers' Guide to the
Galaxy

Max Giovagnoli

Carnegie Mellon University: ETC Press

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VIA Film & Transmedia
VIA University College

PROLOGUE

FOUR STEPS ON THE “TRANSMEDIA WAY”

Forty-five years after the first, pioneering experiments, and fifteen after the official birth of its definition, **transmedia is still an unexplored frontier, the most complex narrative model and a mindset revolution in the world of contemporary storytelling.**

Unpredictable outcome of industrial projects and artistic experimentations, of academic researches and of the intense, collaborative networking activity of a small group of new media pioneers at the beginning of the third millennium, transmedia storytelling is today an advanced working manifold for the Studios and for communication agencies, for publisher and public institutions, for entertainment, information and communication, for the Arts, the Education and for social operators engaged in developing complex imageries in multi-platform projects simultaneously involving multiple audiences. And this is not all. **Transmedia has today become an approach, rather than a whole discipline. It is a vision itself. A new boundary.**

This is why I have named my book *The Transmedia Way*, borrowing the metaphor of the ‘Milky Way’, the galaxy which hosts our solar system together with 400 billion other stars: it is a befitting picture of the contemporary media universe, while transmedia is a path running through it, leaving a permanent wake around its course. In its short history, Transmedia has showed how theories and models originating from astronomy, astrophysics, and quantic physics turned out to be extremely useful in order to explain – among other things – the origin

and the “form” of imaginative universes, the gravitational effects of multi-platform narratives, or the structure of complex communicative universes. So, it is not a coincidence that in these pages I shall name black holes, nebulae, and outer space, curvature and metaverses, superpositioning and doppler effect...

If the contemporary media ecosystem is a deep space open to any form of imagination, certainly **transmedia is the best travel tool box to trace new routes within its boundaries**. A travel bag full of well-tested techniques. A repertoire of maps essential to keep the lead, from one success to the other, one experience to the next experience. By far not the output of any artistic movement, nor a Zeitgeist or a blunder!

It is also true that, as I am writing this book, an artistic and industrial revolution is happening. A change of pace or a “Spanish Opening”, as chess players would put it. At this crucial point of its history, **transmedia is evolving thanks to the second generation of authors and producers, celebrating a new phase made of experiments which often are not “pure” transmedia, but hybrids with other disciplines emerging with the aim of meeting the stimulations of the contemporary media ecosystem**. Those many who, including myself, have in the course of the last few years fed academic papers and online magazines with their researches, those who have made multi-million franchise enterprises flourish and created extraordinary media campaigns and narrative experiences, are starting to point their study nuzzles towards narrower fields. They are turning into virtual reality experts, robotics consultants, new media philosophers, experience designers, showrunners, promotions managers for the film industry or museum curators for international institutions; or even broadcasters and new media publishers. This is not happening by mere chance, nor is it the result of a perspective misjudgment. It is rather their pioneeristic nature, and the experience grown over the years to push them into experimenting “something completely different” and to “push themselves beyond transmedia”.

Take a short walk in the San Francisco ILM X-Media Lab, in the writing branch of the Marvel Cinematic Universe or in those of HBO dealt with in the following pages, take a look at the main independent video game or documentary festivals or a peek at interactive installations or conventions and brand markets for Europe and South America, US and Asia, to understand how natural and ordinary transmedia storytelling has become. Look at the most innovative communication campaigns, or the worldwide projects aimed at social enhancement and at a more sustainable and shared globalization: transmedia is always there, punctual and effective, with its participatory platforms and its complex narrative universes. Less visible than it used to be, because it is given for granted by now, and maybe more present in different countries than those it emerged first, but there, alive and kicking. Transmedia is a noun that, on the field and within the spin of a single generation, has earned the honor of also turning into an adjective which, as such, is educating and growing along with a new generation of creators who operate with an approach that is practical and critical at the same time¹, ductile and usable in contexts of industrial production processes, as well as independent projects and new narrative experiments, form long-term narratives² to communications artforms for global changes³, which today appear to be closer and better achievable thanks to Transmedia narrative.

1. As Caitlin Burns writes: "Being involved in transmedia ten years ago meant experimenting with new platforms for narratives, while also developing the language for their critique - both in real time" in: Burns, C., *Transmedia: Art Forms created in Real Time*, accessed november 15, 2016, immerse.news
2. The definition is Christopher Markus's and Steve McFeely's, Captain America: Civil War and other blockbusters screenwriters, and it specifically refers to the writing modalities within MCU (Marvel Cinematic Universe), where each single movie is connected to the others since the very beginning when the story is created, and it is closely related to its diffusion on the various platforms. See: Berkovitz, J., Captain America Writers talk about long form of storytelling in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, accessed may 6, 2016, fastcocrete.com
3. I am referring to the researches on the so called "Collective Journey" as an instrument of social influence on transmedia narratives, a perspective I shall deal with in chapter six and on which transmedia producers Jeff Gomez, Maya Zuckerman and Joe Brewers are focusing on while I am writing this work. See: Zuckerman, M., *The*

This is the landscape and the reason, for me, to write a new book on transmedia narratives, communication and design. For the last 10 years, I've been attending workshop and master classes in different nations with creatives, artists, professionals and designers, trying to help them spreading their imaginative universes and their communications projects thanks to transmedia strategies and storytelling. At the same time I have carried out projects both with the Studios and with independent producers; I have experimented new formats and work plans, new production models and planning prototypes. This book consists of all those experiences. It is the result of all the projects I have made, and a "captain's log" of those journeys. With 100 examples of the most relevant and original transmedia campaigns/franchises invented over the past years, from America to Europe, from Asia to Africa and Australia, it gives you all the necessary tools to keep your own walk on the transmedia way.

Since most of the techniques I have described in my past essays⁴ have anticipated those currently in use by media players all over the world, I am here re-introducing them in a more updated and organised form. My discussion is also endorsed by the presence of many prestigious friends, first rated professionals and academics, who list among the most important international producers and scholars in transmedia history.

The present work owe so much to those two elements and the reader shall find multiple traces of them, being structured as a workshop as it is. In it the discourse traces back all the steps necessary to the creation of a transmedia project, analyzing its most important techniques. The first two chapters focus on the creation of imaginative universes, complex story worlds and

Collective journey Part. 1 and Part. 2 accessed January 26 and 29, 2016, huffingtonpost.com

4. The first essay I have written on cross-media narratives was the first published in Europe on the subject. See: M. Giovagnoli, *Fare cross-media* (2005), to which *Cross-Media. Le nuove narrazioni* (2009) and *Transmedia Storytelling e Comunicazione* (2013) have followed.

multilayered narratives, while the third and the fourth go deeper into the substance concerning design, from the planning of the communicative system to the art direction and the creation of compelling and engaging experience for the audience. The fifth and the sixth chapter witness a change in perspective, being thematic deepening which set sail away from the world of information and entertainment to address specifically to the transmedia focusing on branding, institutional communication and art, as well as to the no profit and educational universes, the latter representing a high experimental profile low budget perspectives and therefore casting among the most interesting and energetic stars of the transmedia way. The final appendix is dedicated to the workflow and to the compilation of the necessary documents to present a transmedia project which meet the present market criteria: it is a quick user-friendly toolkit which too is composed of extracts from real projects. Each case study mentioned in this book is in fact connected to a precise key concept, so that the reader shall be able to adopt both the features which have made it successful and its possible weak points. Moreover, I have included in my work – in which I also create my own “work methodology” – exercises, documents and simulation which can be used as a “toolbox” for the transmedial author. In other words, *my Transmedia Way*.

I am sending it to print hoping that it shall be customized and successfully used by all authors, scholars, experimenters, all the new pioneers who will come across and read it. I wouldn't think it appropriate to either say or anticipate more than I already have. The moment has come, in fact, to take a sit in the cockpit. To switch the drive unit on. To be at disposal of the journey. To seal the shipboots and be ready for taking off and vanishing, once again, lightning among the stars.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

How many people contributed to this work? How many supported it and gave me their help, their precious contribution, a “trick” or some inspirational topics which has been useful for this research?

An unforgettable debt join me with all the producers, the professors, the authors and all the students who have been experimenting with me for the last years in so many projects, campaigns and international works. But this is the page of the special mentions. The page of the ones who contributed the most. You have been the most inspiring companions I would never imagine: on paper, in occasion of public conventions or just discussing online, along the Transmedia Way. So, thank you all, my friends. Thanks to Ivan Askwith and Bruno Bernardo, Julio Bertolotti, Caitlin Burns and Derrick De Kerkhove, Christy Dena and Jeff Gomez, Nicoletta Jacobacci, Fernando Irigaray and Henry Jenkins, Tim Kring, Damon Lindelov and Kate Mc Kallum, Mike Monello, Alison Norrington and Robert Pratten, Stephen Reinghold and Lina Srivastava, Simon Staffans, Lance Weiler, Jordan Weisman and Maya Zuckerman. And thanks again to Drew Davidson of Carnegie Mellon University of Pittsburgh and Louis Thonsgaard of VIA University in Aarhus who supported me with the english edition of the book. Ladies and gentlemen, this work is dedicate to you all.

INTRODUCTION

THE TRANSMEDIA CREATOR: STORYTELLER, PRODUCER AND NOW...DESIGNER

Welcome in *transmediasphere*, where stories float all around us and inside us. Stories and brands, trends, conflicts, experiences, ways of being. A new ecosystem, rich of technology and complex, deep and charming. A *transmediaverse* where audiences and creators share multi-platform story worlds, stack up pieces from all the messages and products, the works and the experiences mixed in the global flux, and reconstruct their *invisible scripts*. Create new sensorial combinations and new conversational artforms.

Making transmedia means creating complex imaginative universes for stories distributed on different media platforms, spreading multilayered plots and managing complex characters for entertainment, information and communications, for brand and public institutions, for cultural heritage and the Arts, for education and for goods. Look around you: screens, devices, texts, brands... Transmedia is everywhere, even if we don't perceive it, most of the time. Digital tales are available 24 hours a day ready to be told, crossed or matched by intangible authors hidden in the real and in the digital worlds. Transmedia is *not-
or-just* a new "geography of the tale", though. It's about our way of imaging our emotions and interpreting the reality. Using the stories we love, the places we own, the products we buy, the devices we keep in our pockets, the trends we share and all the other *status* of presence and identity we use – day by day – to be part of the worldwide game of contemporary communications. In this perspective, a branded series as well as the launch of

a movie, a fashion show, a social benefit project or a political campaign, an urban game or an interactive installation can all be pieces of the same, amazing, sprawling mosaic.

At the reckoning with the even more liquid, complex and messy communicative contemporary ecosystem, transmedia storytelling is now taking over a more adult and compelling role. Every day, new ways of consuming and sharing contents are growing out. Industrial and social processes get more complex and chaotic. Media platforms and technologies are multiplying themselves, and all these changes urgently need highly functional, advanced design skills. A wider and a wiser perspective. A new way to imagine and to tell the present with immediate, less mechanical and furthermore long-lived tools¹. And the transmedia author? The creative storyteller? The producer? As with every pioneering organism, they are evolving and anticipating some of the global incomings. This is why transmedia needs today storytellers, showrunners and producers but also... *designers*, to succeed. This is the reason why the term 'project' appears to be so crucial for the present work and its narrative is often broken by images of projects and frameworks or jottings of works in progress, all elements which integrate my text, thus making it more like a whole.

Sketches and patterns, charts and prototypes, experiences and new models of collaborative working are even more crucial in transmedia experiences, works and campaigns involving simultaneously story crafting and game design, web design, interface design, sound design, video design, graphic design, brand identity creation, social media and marketing strategies,

1. Simon Staffans seems to share such a point of view when he defines contemporary communication system as "Now Media" and, specifically on transmedia storytelling, he writes: "We can achieve a great initial impact with a message, a story, that is clearly and shinningly black-and-white – easy to grasp, easy to encompass, easy to react to and easy to find like-minded people to ally with around. But for a longer-lasting impact, we need to think deeper, further and longer" in: Staffans, S., *One Year in Now Media*, Vol. 6, p. 12, accessed december 31, 2016, simonstaffans.com

cultural promotions, educational patterns, arts management and all the possible crossing of these different disciplines.

Mixed with advanced storytelling and multi-platform production procedures, *design* is today a practical tool, a stylistic breakthrough and an essential linguistic blend along the transmedia way. An example?

Angry Birds is the most popular app of all time, with over 3 billion downloads and over 100 million monthly active player. It is about a group of funny and unrepentant birds, each with a superpower, each armed with a sling, fighting against an army of little green pigs that are threatening their eggs. Created in 2009 by Finnish Rovio Entertainment, *Angry birds* has been ahead of and later fully ridden the transmedia revolution. It has conquered the world and influenced an entire generation thanks to series of books, comics, cartoons, video games, theme parks and an overflowing merchandising. It is a success based on simplicity and immediacy, on narrative and, most of all, on design:

- that biting of **characters and game environment**;
- that simple and direct of the story (**story design**);
- that immediate of the dynamics of use (**game design**);
- that of the **production and of multilinear marketing**;
- that of the delivery and content use (**experience design**).

In 2016, *Angry Birds* hit the big screen too. At the release of *The Angry Birds Movie*, first full-length feature 3D film produced by Rovio Animation, Sony Pictures spread its transmedial power and created a \$400 million promo campaign for the film in 100 countries, involving more than 50 big partners. The objective was that of creating a new audience for the brand (the first players were fastly growing up...) and the idea was to throw (catapult) the audience onto a network of experiences to bring them back on to that of the game, again betting on design. Several

campaigns were created (*Makes Angry Birds Happy* with Citroen, for instance, or *The Official Stunt Animal* with Jack Links, and many more) which simply did not only make narrative content boom out, but also enriched the brand's expanded universe. In order to achieve such an objective, the semantic basin² of the story was renovated to create a 'perennial pop culture property', and therefore not a simple *portmanteau*, but a much more complex transmedial franchise.³

This is also why at the time of the first release of the movie a brand new video game was also released. *Angry Birds Action* combined the traditional story world of the game with the design character of the movie, thus creating not only a simple tie-in with the movie but an extensive augmented-reality promotions tool. Fans could interact with the characters in a funny prequel to the movie. Then, thanks to more than 1 billion 'Birdcodes', they could play mini-games and virtual experiences distributed in different products and places (with partners like McDonald's, Lego and H&M, for example). Finally, one last BirdCode was hidden in the end credits of *The Angry Birds Movie*. Triggered by an inaudible watermark in the audio, the game unlocked the notorious pigs and activated an extra end-credits scene"⁴. The result was the creation of a new story world, an expanded communicative system and a richer and more diversified relationship with the game's users, thanks to easter eggs and other consumer experiences enriched by the new design and developed thanks to the approach to augmented reality and to the movie's narrative contents.

2. For a definition of "semantic basin" of a story, seen as the relationship between its lifespan and the duration of its related imaginary, see: G. Durand, *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire*, 1960.
3. In transmedia storytelling *franchise* is a narrative universe given to a communicative system which creates diverse experiences of individual use on different platforms. *Portmanteau* relies on a communicative system which transfers creative forms connected to the same experience of use on different platforms.
4. Briant, J., "Angry Birds Action" Game uses Augmented Reality to Promote Movie, Brands Tie-Ins, accessed april 27, 2016, variety.com



Img. 1 The Angry Birds Movie (2016). Poster, screenshots of the game and “birdcode” in the end credits of the film.

The best transmedia storytelling experiences invite audience members to immerse themselves in the story world, exploring different aspects of character and incident, journeying to “distant mountains” which are aspects of the story world that may not be obvious but are worth finding. The best of these experiences also invite audience members to somehow contribute to the dialog that is the best of what storytelling communication holds. A truly interactive transmedia experience is signified by the participant’s ability not simply to choose between two threats of narrative but to impact the narrative itself. The best transmedia storytelling experiences drives authors to consider the audience members’ engagement with the narrative, particularly as it is mediated through various technologies. And because we live in an age where the very media that delivers the story can be used by the participant to invite more people to the experience (or tell them to stay away), authors must make an extra effort to enrich and refine the story itself. Quality is the winner of the Digital Age. – *Jeff Gomez – transmedia producer and CEO of Starlight Runner Entertainment*

CHAPTER 1

THE UNIVERSE CREATION

It all starts with a story, in transmedia too. But stories live and float in the sky. They result from mysterious gas mixtures, and accidental relationships. They are built on conflicts and internal evolutions and contaminate themselves and continuously evolve. They result from processes of assimilation and hybridization and it is exactly for this reason that – even before the story itself – the most crucial issue is the *imaginative universe*. When you start working on a transmedia project or work the first thing you learn is that you need to establish the primitive universe of the story before focusing on the plot and deepen into the characters' psychology or emotions. Designing the imaginative universe of the tale is the first step of the creative process in transmedia. The fundamental role of making a given universe depends on two essential causes:

- because within the imaginative universe different narratives shall come to life – all those distributed by the different media involved in the process;
- because all the possible contaminations in the different platforms involved in the project, including those produced by the public within the narrative, recreating parts, characters or settings, all shall depend on creating the proper imaginative universe.

And it is not just that. A full development and deepening of the *complex universe* of the narrative also allow a transmedia work to express at its best the emotional power of its story worlds and its capacity of adaptation to the different assets of the communication system.

T Transmedia narratives live in increasingly complex imaginative universes. These are transmediaverses which can encompass heterogeneous audiences, camouflage using the language of all the media involved, envisage narrative galaxies which alternate and juxtapose, with characters popping out from anywhere, realistic or totally imaginary settings.

Each story is set in an imaginative universe, and each universe ruled by its own laws. First, the imaginative universe is inhabited by one or more story worlds which contain more stories developed on different media and connected to each other. Moreover, differently from traditional narratives, in transmedia imaginative universes the told stories are paired with untold stories, which can be used in case the project became particularly successful or, conversely, should it prove ineffective, thus in need of some extra narrative fuel, or in case it should add more media assets to its original communication system.

In Figure 1.1 it is clearly shown how creating a story world can be crucial although it does not represent the final step of the different narrative opportunities an imaginative universe can offer.

For this reason, before moving to the creation of the story world, we need to design the imaginary universe where all the narratives shall be set. Those narratives shall be spread over the different platforms in the planned communicative time and space, and then assigned to two main type of macro-content: *artworks* (video, images, text, soundscape...) and *experiences* (real world, virtual, immersive, installation...).

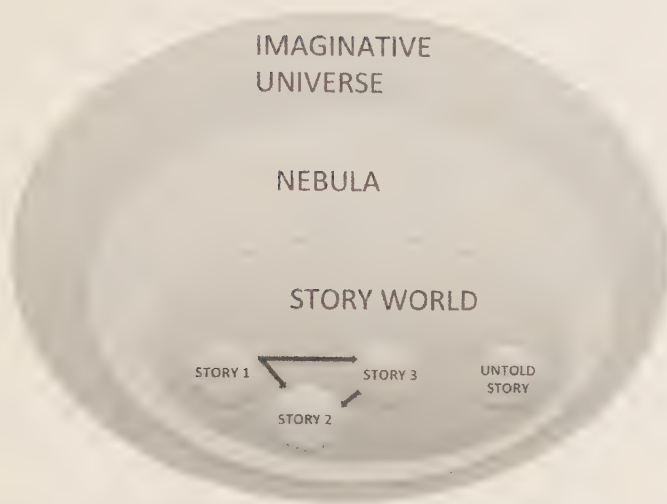
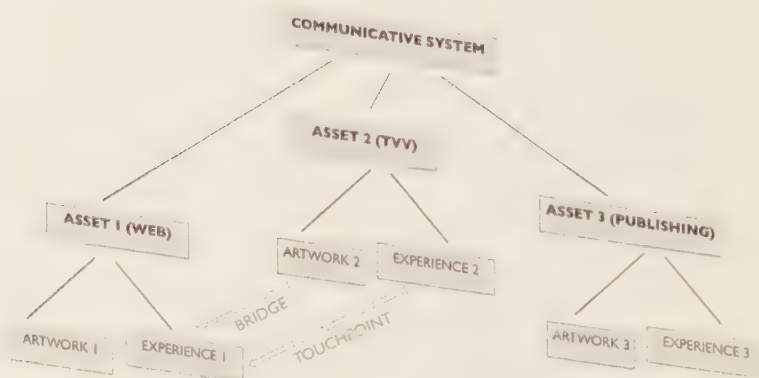


Image 1.1. Imaginative universe, Nebula and Story World in a transmedia project.

The “tree” model for communicative systems, which is typical for cross-media projects, cannot completely comply with such a complexity. Structuring a transmedia project by merely organizing it into different media assets developed into artworks and experiences connected to each other, does not appear to be the most effective option any longer. For instance, the interaction between the artwork of an asset of a project with that of another project (thus creating a *touch point* between the two media), or, conversely, the interaction of the artwork of an asset with the experience of another asset (thus creating a *bridge*¹) may show satisfactory results if the content to move on to different media is identical, or if the transmedia project is not complex. This process shall definitely not be adequate to manage complex

1. For example, the interactions between the images published on a website and on a social network would create a touch point, whilst the use of a video on you tube used to promote a contest related to a thematic park could create a bridge between different kind of contents on different media platforms.

imaginative universes such as those we will deal with later in this chapter.



Img. 1.2 Basic Communicative System in a cross-media / transmedia project.

This is the reason why the old idea of cross media communicative system in transmedia has been replaced by media clusters, universes organized into “islands”, “neural networks” or content clusters. The transmedia designer, more than the creator of any traditional kind of narrative, needs to become a cultural activator and a catalyzer of different narratives, a story architect, a fan correspondent and a keeper of stories and user experiences created by both authors and – as much as possible – by the public. An example?

In 2009, tv broadcaster Discovery Channel was to launch the 22nd edition of one of the most successful docuseries of its schedule: *The Shark Week*. They may have gone for a traditional advertising campaign, such as newspaper ads, tv spots, online banners. The audience of the series was there already as for them it was a must see. Success was therefore guaranteed. The broadcaster, though, was in need of lowering the average age of the audience, in order to secure the series longevity, and, at the same time, of making the image of the protagonist of

the story (the white shark) less repellent to the public eye. The campaign was created by *Campfire*, a New York agency directed by Mike Monello, one of the authors of *The Blair Witch Project*, who defined it “a transmedia experience that used influencer outreach, Facebook Connect and a website to bring the visceral terror of a shark attack directly to its audience²”. The web, social networks, satellite tv and the real world all shared one of the most atavistic fears of contemporary collective imagination in a project that planned different stages for the involvement of audience, namely:

- the creation of a number of stories (text, videos and documentaries) about people that died because of shark attacks (from the Second World War until today), any single user could identify with;
- the creation of glass containers of clothes remnants, written pages and other proofs of victims’ lives until the fatal attack, sent to influencers, entertainment press, movie bloggers and radio personalities to make the messages and the brand identity viral with an ironic perspective;
- the viral dissemination of glass bottles with messages in eleven U.S. beaches, in order to popularize the campaign;
- the victims’ profiles activation on Facebook, that can be signaled and shared on the social network before the program’s broadcast.

Frenzied Waters ruled all the essential aspects of transmedia *emotional competency*, as we are going to see. More particularly, in the advertising campaign digital and physical space were working sequentially and in different interactive forms which were yet “playing the same music altogether”, in a crescendo whose role was to inform, puzzle and involve the audience more

2. <http://www.campfirenyc.com>



Img. 1.3 Frenzied Waters (2009). Short TV documentaries, tin can kits to be spread over eleven U.S. cities and online ads of the campaign.

and more while waiting for the show to be broadcast. The result? **The creation of many short stories of fiction sharing the same imaginative universe** (which was dealt with scientifically in the series) that made the direct and sanguinary image of the story's main object (the frenzied waters rippled by the menacing presence of sharks before their dreadful attacks) a marginal element, thus following the broadcaster's request.

Now that this quick overview on the main characteristics of narrative universes is complete, we shall proceed with the more specific analysis of **the three essential imaginative levels of any transmedia project: the *imaginative universe*, the *nebula* and the *story world*.**

The portrait of the perfect universe for a transmedia project is a world where the person experiencing the story can't tell what parts of it are "real" and what parts are "fictitious"... and more importantly, they don't care. Complete immersion! I use transmedia storytelling to expand my experience of a story I already love as opposed to a bridge into a story I haven't yet experienced. In this perspective, I start scaling the world so that it's not too big. Transmedia is like life... it can be overwhelming. And keeping it as simple as possible at first is critical. — *Daemon Lindelof* – transmedia creator for TV (*Lost*) and cinema (*Star Trek*, *Prometheus*, *Star Trek Into darkness*)

THE IMAGINATIVE UNIVERSE

Entering the imaginative universe of a transmedia project is for the public always an articulate and complex experience, made of platforms, stories, content, experiences... This is the reason why **the public needs, straight from the beginning, narrative elements able to play the role of amplifier of meaning and facilitator of the user's experience.** This is the space for what, in transmedia theory, I have defined **"the nuclear power of the imagery"** a concept that states as, in a narrative universe, the combination of forces able to unleash the narrative energy over the different plans of interaction with the public depends on three basic semantic elements:

KT

- *universal synthetic structures;*
- *imaginary isotopes;*
- the story's *archetypal figures.*

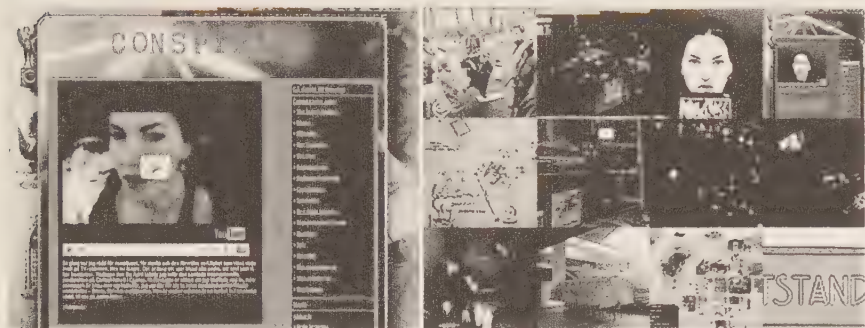
3. I have first defined this theory (*The Nuclear Power of the Imagery*) during a TED event which took place in October 2011 in Rome.

Universal synthetic structures, imaginary isotopes and archetypal figures represent three interpretative levels and three cross spaces for creative intervention, essential for the author and the audience involved in their communication within universes spread over diverse media. The question is how to manipulate them, how to use them. In order to explain it in a simple way, let us start from an example taken from transmedia “prehistory”.

The Truth About Marika (*Sanningen om Marika*) is the title of an original and effective case of transmedia storytelling created by The Company P. for the Swedish SVT TV broadcaster and winner of an Interactive Emmy Award for the best Interactive TV Service Category in 2008. Presented as a “participation drama”, it was a TV series which, during its broadcast, changed from a traditional fiction into an *alternate reality game*⁴ that became very popular in Sweden. To that end, *The Truth About Marika* involved TV, radio, web, social networks, mobile phones and most importantly... the Swedish at all. During this tale’s fiction, in fact, the first alert of the system was a woman’s appeal to the audience in order to find her friend, who had just gone missing. News spread on the web and the hunt soon began throughout the whole country. Was Marika one of the 20,000 people that are still missing in Sweden today? Each news broadcast, each report and each reconstruction had public space in a panel discussion, which was reconstructed through some actors of the same broadcast, simulating an actual disappearance. Meanwhile, the hunt involved online associations, search engines, online games, GPS, chat rooms, conflict rooms, a QR code, an official website (*Conspirare*) and a secret society (*Ordo*

4. “Alternate Reality Games use real-world technology, devices, locations and sometimes people to create an engaging story-driven experience for their players. There are always one or more mysteries to be solved and a long, involved chain of clues scattered around the world (or real world accessible) that as unveiled tell the story of the game. [...] A key element of an alternate reality games is that the players of the game often act cooperatively to solve the mystery”. Ref. to: Dowd, T., Fry, M., Niederman, M., Steiff, J., *Storytelling Across Worlds. Transmedia for creatives and producers*, 2013, pp. 19-20.

Serpentis), mysteriously linked to the disappearance. Fear, anxiety, desire to act: considering the success of the project, the most important parameter, on which the emotional sharing was based, was the audience's unconscious and subconscious satisfaction. In this phase of the imaginative process, the most important aspect was that all information and implications of the tale passed invisibly through the cognition of the common pidgin⁵ shared by the author and the medium (witnesses or the project itself), the story (in the fabula, plot or scenes) and its receivers (the multiple audiences) in all the settings (the media versions) of the story.



Img. 1.4 The Truth About Marika (2008). Website and screenshots of different transmedia experiences of the participation drama.

The example of *The Truth About Marika*, one of the first successful cases in European Transmedia history, allows us to deal with universal synthetic structures, imaginative isotopes and archetypal figures of the story in transmedia universe in a clear yet sufficiently articulated manner. Therefore.

5. *Pidgin* is an ancient language that comes from the mixture of languages spoken by different people, who came into contact because of immigration, colonizations, or trade relations. Considering the transmedia communication, it expresses a communicative code that is shared between the sender and receiver of all the messages and the contents within a publishing project.

UNIVERSAL SYNTHETIC STRUCTURES

Universal synthetic structures are the basic coordinates of the narrative universe on which a transmedia tale is based; they are the signs and dimensions able to catch and transmit to the audience the reference situational context of the project. For example, Aristotle's three unities (space, time and action) or the characters' ways of expressing themselves and all the other conditions that structure the ordinary and extraordinary worlds of the story⁶. Those structures operate at a conscious level on the perception of the audience, and it is through them that the public is stimulated into sharing the *anthropological route*⁷ undertaken by the protagonist of the story in a more direct and loyal way. These are universal coordinates, shared by the audiences of all the media participating in the project, and they are also synthetic, that is ready to be developed in different forms of experiences. In the case of *The Truth About Marika*, for example, the universal synthetic structures were represented, at the beginning, by the processes of feedback and notifications (written, broadcast or televised) developed for the audience; and, after, by the urban quest activated by the authors involved in disseminating clues day and night (with QR codes that could be photographed by smartphones, for instance) all around the national urban fabric and the digital space on the web.

IMAGINATIVE ISOTOPEs

Differently from the synthetic structures, imaginative isotopes are iconic elements directly addressed, in terms of point of view and interpretation, to the subconscious of the user. To explain them easily, they are like symptoms of other realities, different from the ones on the surface of the story, or which are hidden

6. In order to better analyze the imaginary as an instrument for knowledge, ref. to: Anderson, J. R., *Cognitive psychology and its implications*, 1980.
7. Gilbert Durand defines the *anthropological route* as the imaginative exchange between the subjective plan of the users and the objective plan of the setting of a story comparing it to a kind of adventurous route made by the public. In G. Durand, *The Anthropological Structures of the Imaginary*, cit.

beneath it, and they are important mainly because they can grant the user's interpretative cooperation and facilitate the audience's movements from a story to the other within the narrative universe. In chemistry, isotopes are nucleus of the same elements with the same number of atoms but a different number of neutrons, which can interact more easily with the biosphere and stabilize some natural biological cycles; similarly, imaginative isotopes are a sort of passe-partout allowing us to enter in the universe of a story. They do not enter the story on an upper level, but it is like they have always been there. Just mentioning them, the result is to give the audience the impression of the right track, to properly face the challenge of use and, thus, be part of the game. The use of imaginative isotopes in transmedia project is essential also with the aim of finding some sort of contact between one medium and the other. The directness of the action on the subconscious can grant easily turns into a sense of presence, thus involving the user in first person, with high probability of success. In the case of *The Truth About Marika*, the imaginative isotopes used were all the key-words repeated on the TV show and in the online pass-the-word developed by the authors, particularly during the young lady's and her husband's appeal, due to their desperation to find their missing friend. They were short messages that indirectly talked to the audience about one of its worst fears: disappearing or not having one more day (as happened while you were reading the tale) with the person that was beside you on the couch.

ARCHETYPAL FIGURES

While universal synthetic structures are the first available "bridge" to start the conscious involvement of the audience, and isotopes have to get the users' subconscious involved, archetypal features provide the project with the main emotional connection in order to have the unconscious participation of the audience, both on the personal level and the collective imagination level. The existence and use of archetypal figures, that is, the primordial symbols shared among several cultures on the

imaginative level, correspond to a crucial area in the communicative systems and the *homination*⁸ of their stories. Describing in full all the archetypal figures identified by psychology is not obviously among the purposes of this book, and yet transmedia authors should really study them in detail.

In the case of *The Truth About Marika*, for example, the archetypal features used in the tale were: the shadow, the messenger, the shapeshifter and the con, archetypes elaborated by Carl Gustav Jung⁹, the “double identity” theme and the biblical prototype of the Original Sin (also represented by images through the emblem of *Ordo Serpentis* and the name of one of the official sites of the project: *Conspirare*). As an example what follows is a table containing a scheme of the most popular archetypes in contemporary film and storytelling narratives.

After having completed the analysis on *The Truth about Marika*, let us focus on another case, a more recent and complex one, much different from the previous one. Let us leave TV journalism and transmedia prehistory to look at its present.

Mr. Robot (2015) is a pluri-awarded USA Network thriller series written by Sam Esmail, and the launch of its second season has been one of the most effective example of transmedia project for promoting, in 2016. *Mr. Robot* is a psychological thriller which follows Elliot Alderson, a young programmer who works as a cyber-security engineer by day and as a vigilante hacker by night. Recruited by the mysterious leader (Mr. Robot) of an underground hacker group (fsociety), Elliot starts working for him to destroy the same megacorporation (E Corp) he is paid to protect.

8. About relation among time, imaginary and *homination*, ref. to: Lévy, P., *Collective intelligence...* cit., 1994.

9. For a comprehensive overview of mythology and recurring Jungian archetypes in audiovisual narratives, as well as for the basic matrix of the scheme in this paragraph, see P. W. Indick, *Psychology for Screenwriters*, 2005.

| Archetype | Function | Example |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Hero | Primary and positive symbol of the self | Ezio Auditore in <i>Assassin's creed</i> |
| Persona | Public masque of the character | Clark Kent in <i>Superman</i> |
| Shadow | Secret and obscure part of the self | Voldemort for <i>Harry Potter</i> |
| Goddess | Female mentor or mother | Galadriel in <i>The Hobbit</i> |
| Wise Old Man | Male Mentor or father | Obi One Kenobi in <i>Star Wars</i> |
| Soul | Feminine side of the male identity | Edward Cullen, in <i>Twilight</i> |
| Shadow Soul | Dark feminine (femme fatale) | Catwoman in <i>Batman Returns</i> |
| Animus | Masculine side of female identity | Bella Swan in <i>Twilight</i> |
| Shadow animus | Dark and violent masculine | Hannibal Lecter in <i>The Silence of the Lambs</i> |
| Con | Con. hero or fake divinity | The Joker in <i>Batman</i> |
| Shapeshifter | Transformer (antagonist) | Dracula |

Img. 1.5 The Archetypal Figures – Scheme.

The series' imaginative universe is very complex. Its situational context is that of nerd culture, hacktivism and Anonymous Movement and uses the language of programmers, developers and hackers with an anti-consumerist and anti-establishment spirit. References shift from the show to the web and back, in all the possible media variation of the brand. The broadcaster's website, for example, contains news and previews, emojis, gifs and easter eggs, while in the platform it is possible to find an ebook with relative access and a game app the user can download for free. These elements give a significant contribution into the creation of the imaginative universe's synthetic universal structures. The first, Elliot's journal (*Red Wheelbarrow*) is written

by show creator Sam Esmail and show writer Courtney Looney. Before and during the events of season two, Elliot recorded his most private thoughts in this journal. The notebook holds curious artifacts and is full of sketches. The aim of the journal is to help the audience discover the story behind *Mr. Robot*'s season two. How? With hacking the mind of the main character of the series. On the contrary, the game app of the project (ROBOT:1.51exfiltratiOn) is set in the first season. The story is very simple: you find a smartphone on the ground outside the Fun Society Arcade at Coney Island. The phone belongs to Darlene, a hacker ready to commit a huge cybercrime. In order to do so she needs her phone back, to succeed! The goal is to deep into Elliot's fractured personality and temporarily assume the point of view of the fsociety, using the app to communicate with characters from the show and making choices that affect the story.¹⁰

The series' main website, hosted by the USA Network broadcaster, is paired with another one, whoismrrobot.com, which contains references the audience can use as imaginative isotopes in order to penetrate deeply into the universe of the story. In the platform content we can find: different artworks, the form of an online psychological test designed to see if you can hang with fsociety (logging via Facebook), a puzzle game, a footage of the aftermath of the hack plus references to Deflategate and Bernie Madoff, the link to a film referenced in Season 2 (*The Careful Massacre of the Bourgeoisie*), QR codes and bridges between the show and some online experiences (for instance, reproducing the commands 'Darlene dictated to Angela' in one of the episodes¹¹). The narrative isotope also

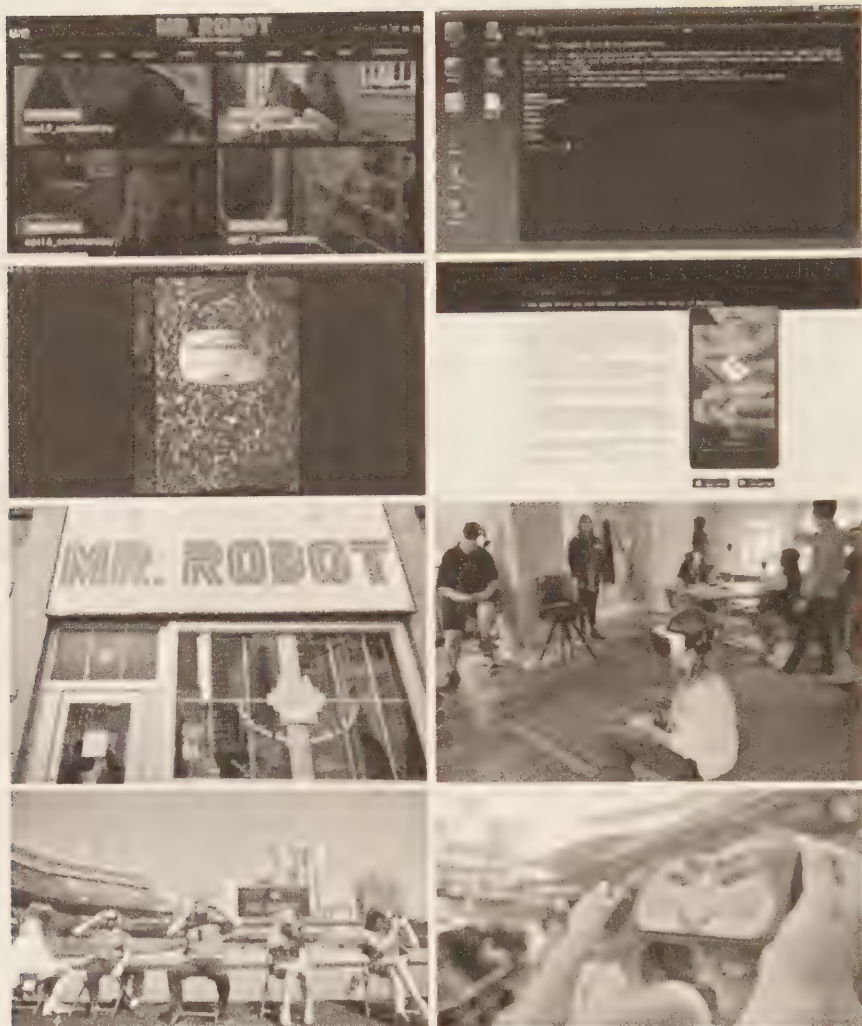
10. <http://www.usanetwork.com/mrrobot>

11. As Lili Loofbourow writes in: Loofbourow, L., *Mr. Robot isn't a TV show anymore. It's a videogame*, accessed august 12, 2016, theweek.com : "You can go deeper: If you click on "My Briefcase" on the "desktop", you'll find articles documenting the arcade's violent past (including an obituary for a Mary Meghan Fisher). You can access Romero's list of FBI agents, which apparently got him killed. And that's not all! These aren't just cute archives. If, for example, you read the "README.txt" file on the desktop, you'll learn enough basic programming lingo to list the directory contents in

represents the website layout, which feels familiar to '90s and Telnet, and ALF wallpaper as well as the use of the leet speak and the citation of movies like *Fight Club*, *American Psycho*, *The Matrix*, *A Clockwork Orange* and *V for Vendetta*.

Referred to the narrative isotopes of *Mr. Robot* is also the project created by ISL agency with Twitch, the largest social gaming platform in the world, titled *Mr. Robot Live Debt Deletion* (2016). ISL built a real-world hacker lair and created a three day live-stream event. "Through carefully choreographed vignettes and an artistically designed set, viewers reaped the benefits of our fsociety's digital corporate takedown as we deleted over \$100,000 of the people's debt in real time. ISL built the *Mr. Robot* hacker lair from the ground up. They knew they wanted to maintain fidelity to the *Mr. Robot* lair on the show, but didn't want to create an exact replicate; so, they decided on a creative direction that it should have resonate as familiar, yet curious. ISL landed on combining elements from the actual show, like the fsociety logo and print-outs of the characters, with more custom touches, like a graffiti and object selection. In order to seed awareness and build excitement for the live-stream, they produced 13 scripted vignettes that ranged from 5 seconds to 2 minutes in length that would cut into the E3 Twitch channel; these gave the appearance that there were legitimate hacks into the stream. The results? 309,651 email entries, 63,363 twitter

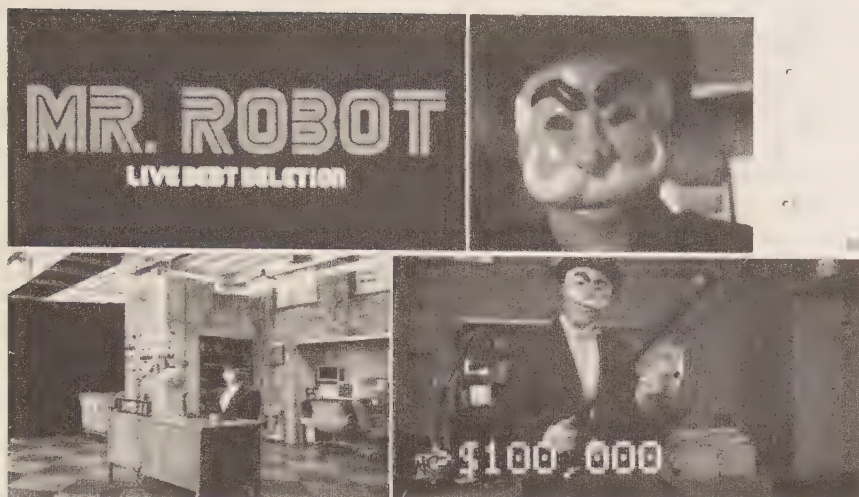
Telnet and (among other things) play a game of Snake. If you want to explore further, try opening telnet and typing in "ls recycle bin", then "open ch347c0d35" to see a kernel panic log (a reference to the third episode this season). If you keep your eyes peeled for IP addresses (they pop up in the unlikelyst places, like freeway signs), the might lead you to a BBS called TV TODAY where you can type in commands to see ANSI art of ALF or Bart Simpson and read bulletin boards about *Doogie Howser*, *The Simpsons*, *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, *Full House*, *Step by Step*, *Head of the Class*, *Dear John*, and *The Cosby Show*. If you want to see some other things in the BBS, try typing in the following commands: A P B P A P B. One of the images there is on Angela's desk in the episode. And hey: if you want to look up what "MARBLECAKE" means, that's up to you".



Img. 1.6 Mr. Robot (2016) and its transmedia partner. The tool on the USA Network platform, book and game app, the whoismrrobot.com website and the VR experience launched at the San Diego Comic-con.

entries, 1,562,280 total views, 17,367 max competitors, and 8,549,422 million minutes of video watched.¹²

12. <https://isl.co/case-studies/mr-robot/>



Img. 1.7 Mr. Robot Live Debt Deletion (2016) Launch Campaign, transmedia project made by ISL for Twitch. The studio broadcasting live shows and intrusions into the platform during E3.

In order to provide a deeper insight into the archetypal figures of Mr. Robot's imaginative universe, we eventually set two transmedia experiences, both focusing on the protagonist, Elliot, seen both as a hero (and anti-hero) and as a shadow and shapeshifter in the course of the narrative: *Hacking Robot*, a live aftershow aired after the season two premiere (with a weekly web-only aftershow titled *Mr. Robot Digital After Show* premiered on The Verge and on the broadcaster's websites after the third episode) and the 13 minutes long *Mr. Robot Virtual Reality Experience* written and directed by Sam Esmail himself. The experience was available during the San Diego Comic-Con, including white Uber vans, an event with the cast at Petco Park and a pop-up installation based in downtown San Diego reproducing *Mr. Robot* repair shop run by Elliot's late father in the show. In the building: mid-1990s era computers, circuit boards and other familiar stuff of Elliot's cove. As Kendall Whitehouse reports: "After taking a seat and putting on a Samsung Gear headset and a pair of headphones, the real world is replaced by the virtual. The virtual environment you initially

enter is Elliot's apartment – essentially identical to the physical location in which you're actually sitting. As you turn your head, Elliot is sitting beside you. While narratively working as a flashback – the video covers events that occurred before the time frame of show's first season – it is, in fact, a contemporary memory. The voice we hear is the voice inside Elliot's head. As he does in the TV show, Elliot is simultaneously thinking to himself and narrating his inner thoughts to us. He is about to go on a first date with Shayla (a character we know from the first season of the show), Elliot's friend, drug supplier and occasional lover. In the VR experience, Elliot is recalling their first encounter. As Elliot smokes a joint, the camera floats upward toward the ceiling and we now view the scene from this more disengaged perspective. We follow Elliot and Shayla on their date to Coney Island and join them as they ride on a Ferris wheel. As their relationship grows closer, the scene melds into an abstract sequence with the two characters dancing in silhouette against a color-shifting background. Finally we return back to the "reality" of the apartment in the virtual world – and, again, in the real world. Aside from being a compelling VR experience, Email's piece also an example of the power of transmedia storytelling. While based on what we know about the television series, it expands the narrative into new territory. It offers new details on the relationship between Elliot and Shayla and adds emotional depth to his feelings of loss and guilt, and adds additional depth to television episodes"¹³.

The nuclear power of the imagery and the strong consistency of the imaginative universe of the tale, together with the dissemination of all these contents, have enriched and made the series' imagery more powerful, thus granting *Mr. Robot* its older audience engagement and establishing a new narrative pact (*fictional pact*) with a different target, one younger, more

13. To watch the official VR experience 360° video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H2jc1w1HhIU>. For Whitehouse's report, ref. to: Whitehouse, K., *The Mr. Robot VR Experience, Storytelling and the Future of Immersive Media*, accessed July 31, 2016 ontechnologyandmedia.com

demanding and more expert on online consumption and *open world narratives*¹⁴ rather than on the TV ones. However, after having set its initial imaginative coordinates, how can we build up a transmedia narrative universe?

THE NEBULA

Following the 1957 theory elaborated by physicist Hugh Everett which focuses on quantum mechanics, transmedia uses multiverses in which several parallel dimensions co-exist, which in our case are designed by the transmedia producer to serve as an actual *nebula* of content, references, and imaginative hooks. The nebula is the combination of narrative suggestions drawn from the collective imagery via cinema, videogames, comics, TV series, live experience, social networks, web, news and all the possible semantic basins chosen to be quoted, hinted at, directly – or metaphorically – embedded into the narrative. They are meant to be our universe's imaginative heritage in terms of meaning, image and sense. A network of references crucial for the contemporary audience's "hive mind"¹⁵.

In order to clarify the concept of nebula – a concept theorized here for the first time – I shall give another example: the story of two gangs of kids fighting each other, every year, in the same place, fighting each other to death on the Brooklyn Bridge, New York. Their story is told in a reality TV show and at the same time in a videogame which interact one another and give the public, through the social network, the possibility of siding and changing the story in real time. The imaginative universe is that of the Bildungsroman, the class fight, the classical myth, the American frontier and it might as well seem a case of parallel narratives, rather than a transmedia project. And yet, while the

14. *Open world, free roam or sandbox* are videogames terms describing spaces and environments where the player can move and is given considerable freedom to act and interact with other characters and objects of the tale. Open world-based games examples are: *Elder Scrolls*, *Fallout*, the *Grand Theft Auto* series, etc.

15. Rose, F., *The Art of Immersion: How the Digital Generations Is Remaking Hollywood*, 2011.

traditional writer usually focuses on the main narrative line of a story, then goes deeper into it, and through it faces various issues (the relationship between characters, the protagonists' arc and all the possible emotions) without diverting from the core of their narrative, transmedia producers must go further. Go forward. Broaden meaning. They will have to dive deep into the collective imagery in search of works and meaningful references for the multiple audiences they will address to. They will then actively use those references in their narratives, both in a direct and in an indirect way, ruling out all the other possible sources and *before* starting the real work on the narrative. In this view, possible references to – for instance – videogame and superheroes shall serve to catch the younger target, while references to *Saturday Night Fever* might give an older audience more appealing suggestions. On the contrary, all that shall not be part of the nebula is not to resound into the narrative and we shall call it *Outer Space*; for instance, on the brooklyn Bridge neither Woody Allen nor Godzilla will appear, as well as there won't be any space for the apocalyptic world of *I am Legend* or episodes from famous pop comedies like *Brooklyn Bridge*.

The nebula is the main imaginative cement keeping any transmedial project joint together. It guarantees engagement and loyalty from different audiences and represents one of the most effective *transmedia tentpoles* to ensure a transmedia project longevity and memorability. The nebula is what makes setting, geography, hierarchies¹⁶ and all the inner rules of that ecosystem actually tridimensional. It builds itself around the whole of the imaginative universe to define it, it preserves it and at the same time gives the author the imaginative and emotional hooks to hang on to when the rhythm of the story or the audience's response are not satisfying. Everything an author can put into the nebula to make it work as a meaningful recall shall in fact play a

16. The use of internal hierarchies is a daily experience in the *foundational narrative*, as defined by Brenda Laurel, which is based on legends, narrative cycles and plots written in order to explain the roles of each group of characters and audience's *simulacra*. Ref. to: Laurel, B., *Design Research: Design and Perspectives*, 2004.



Img. 1.8 Nebula (up) and Outer Space not part of the nebula (below) for the transmedia project connected to the Brooklyn Bridge example.

significant role, differently from all other recalls. This is why you will not find two identical nebulas. **You will not find two authors interpreting a concept in the same way, unless they are teaming with each other or working in a shared modality.** It is thanks to the nebula that one can reach the deep audiences of transmedia projects in an easier and a more direct way, thus creating more intense and long term relations between stories, characters and the public.

The goal for a storyteller is to reach the audience where they live and where they are. The ability to tell story in an accessible and frictionless way becomes not only advantageous, but mandatory today if you are going to reach the widest audience. Using

transmedia methods to reach an audience on multiple platforms, allows you to exchange that broad audience for a “deep audience”. A deep audience is one who is passionate enough to seek out any content pertaining to your narrative, no matter where it is. They will evangelize for you, create content around your narrative, and participate in social media. They will fight for your story and defend it if needed. In short, they will keep you alive through challenging times. — *Tim Kring – transmedia creator and showrunner (Heroes, Crossing Jordan)*

What are, then, the most important features necessary to the creation of an effective imaginative nebula?

- The *personas* and the target audiences of the media assets involved into the project’s communicative system (seen as both horizontal and vertical targets).
- The *milking*, that is the whole made of references and contaminations, assimilations and analogies which can refer to diverse narrative universes, either past or present, to be exploited fishing into their own mythologies and narrative patterns. Those universes will have to be readapted in different forms in order to be given to the audience for fruition.
- The project’s *genius loci*, that is the local identity of the project in its genesis, characters, history, tone and mythology.

To make things more clear I shall use an example taken from my own personal experience: the transmedia project I have created for the Italian launch of the 2012 movie *The Amazing Spider-man*, a reboot of the Sam Raimi saga for the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Stan Lee superhero¹⁷. The objective was to create an advertisement campaign to be added to the world

17. Project coordinated for Warner Bros. Entertainment Italy and IED Rome. Contributors (Video Design, Sound Design, Interaction Design): Michele Baldi, Matteo Bendinelli, Giulia Graziosi, Andrea Iannelli, Antonio Labbro Francia, Emanuele Macri, Matteo Mannarino, Jacopo Panfili, Giuseppe Rizzuto, Livia Salvatorelli, Niccolò Salvetti, Gabriele Sanfilippo and Flavio Vallocchia.

one, one which could exploit the added value of the Italian genius loci and which was to be made of actions addressed to geeks, young creatives and millennials. The occasion was the Italian road show for the launch of the movie, when Andrew Garfield, the protagonist, was to be in Italy. The trigger of the whole campaign was called *The Adventures of Spider Box*, and was implemented creating an assemblable toy made of paper, which could be downloaded online and fully customized. It was left in sensitive areas of the city, to be rescued by its owners via pics and news shared on the movie's non official social network profiles and become the movie's urban testimony. Aimed at lowering the audience average age of the campaign on traditional media, Spider-box was however not an easy tool in terms of interaction with other platforms, and its image was not associated to that of the hero as it appeared on the new movie, that is a younger Spider-man than the past, more faithful to the comics, more problematic and borderline character in his motivations.



Img. 1.9 The Amazing Spider-man (2012) Spider-box layout to be downloaded and assembled, produced for the Italian road show of the protagonist.

Hence the use of the nebula for the creation of a second project, *Happy Birthday Spider-man*, and the occasion was the anniversary

of the creation of the hero. We chose to celebrate its icon (updated with the new suit and true to the style guide produced for the film) with two parallel campaigns to be launched on Facebook; the first was imagined to integrate the image of the hero with those of the greatest masterpieces of figurative art of all times. The second to make the character the protagonist of the most important events of contemporary history, merging his image into photographs famous all over the world. An example of particularly effective milking strategy for the genius loci of Italy – a country extremely rich in terms of culture – the creation of the nebula had in this case very wide grounds, shifting backward and forward in time and space, hunting for content which might result particularly inspiring for the public.

A last venture with reference to Spider-man's nebula was eventually implemented with the project called *Spider-mapping*, a night projection to be held on Rome's Hotel Excelsior's facade (the Hotel where the protagonist was staying). The projection recalled in an indirect, fascinating and metaphoric fashion the Spider-man/Lizard duel of the movie.

In the video that was shot for the projection a giant spider was running on the hotel's tower, then entered the building and, once inside, fought, his DNA altered, the lizard's altered DNA in a furious battle at the end of which the vibrations and the blows resulted in the collapse of the hotel facade. The movie's logo and its release date would eventually emerge out of the destruction of the facade. Such idea was meant to widen the metaphoric dimension of the movie, calling forth its two traits d'union the two protagonists share: an altered DNA which forces the hero into a destiny made of loneliness and diversity, and the constant alternation of good and evil, developed throughout all the platforms of the communicative system. An installation which connected the nebula of the whole project to the universal synthetic structures and the imaginative isotopes of the narrative's imaginative universe.



Img. 1.10 The iconographic imagery of Spider-man, merged with that of great painter and famous photographers of all times, inside and outside the nebula of his first 50 years.

The making of the nebula is clearly a very complex authorial action the transmedia producers needs to share with all the other



Img. 1.11 Rome's Hotel Excelsior and the perspective of the projection planned for its angular tower: the giant spider, Spider-man who fights Lizard and the collapse of the facade revealing the movie's logo and release date.

authors in their team (film directors, screenwriters, writers, art directors, editors...) in order to increase at its best the value of what already is there in the imaginative universe and at the same time to make it rich and richer. It is not a case that, perhaps because of a need for higher autonomy with the stories and characters they create, directors and authors who have contributed the most to the creation of our collective imagination often choose to play a role in the transmedia transpositions or adaptations of their work via mobile, comics or books, on the web or as videogames, leading to a "freshness" and a compelling experience of their imaginative universes. George

Lucas cooperated for the animated TV series made out of *Star Wars*, for example. Peter Jackson ruled the realization of the videogame made from his *King Kong* and created a personal vlog diary for *The Hobbit* saga. Not to mention the Wachowski brothers, who even cooperated with their audience to create the script and direction of short animations, and the storyboard of comics that drew inspiration from the movie and the *Matrix* videogame.¹⁸

THE STORY WORLD

The imaginative universe of the tale is ready and complete. The nebula with its references is ready too. Now what? Now it is time for the story, or, better, to the story world or the story worlds which will host all the stories told by the different media involved into the communicative system of the project. Before moving forth, though, it is necessary to make three introductory remarks.

Firstly, not all ideas and all stories possess the necessary characteristics and energies to fuel transmedial story worlds. Even the most complex structure, the most gripping plot and the most 'alive' characters in some narratives might not be enough to make the public love a story to the point of wanting to live it over and over in digital otherwheres. We shall need more than that and we shall soon see what.

Secondly, it is important for a transmedia tale to create story worlds which empower the continuous dialogue between the involved publishing platforms and the consideration of creative and consumer spaces belonging to each of them, necessarily starting from the audiences, at all times. In transmedia projects, in fact: the authorship is often more hidden than shown, and the responsibility for the tale is disguised in the story and its different uses, in order to consider – since the beginning – the 'what' and 'how' of the tale as a function of the audience, more

18. M. Giovagnoli, *Cross-media. Le nuove narrazioni*, 2009.

than the creator (storyteller, producer, promotions manager). Transmedia storytelling works with invisible screenplays and the 'paradox of the author', that is their invisibility inside and outside the narrative, becomes a *condicio sine qua non* for writers, editors and transmedia producers. No name in the opening credits, albeit the source of satisfaction comes from elsewhere.

Thirdly, storytelling techniques evolve and refine quick and quicker, imageries renovate and the 'time zero' of communication transforms them into a liquid flow, a disjointed universe, but in continuous expansion, structured in systems and galaxies made by active and yet non communicating particles. This is the reason why, in order to "make transmedia" it is crucial to have a story world, to begin with, one which can operate progressive re-distributions of the audience's imagery within the project's communicative system.



Img. 1.12 Story world made of three narratives, with an extra untold story left to the audience's imagination or told independently and furtherly.

WORLD MAKING

The creation of the story world of a transmedia project goes through a process called *world making*¹⁹, which aims at the development of the dense compound of settings, characters, hierarchies, conflicts and rules within the imaginative universe of the narrative. World making is a step of the creative process writers, screenwriters and producers use on a regular basis in their work of storytelling on a single medium, although it takes a much more complex and consistent importance when dealing with narratives spread over different media at the same time. The distinctive elements of transmedia world making are:

- Concept;
- Narrative genre / genres;
- Characters (portraits, internal hierarchies and roles);
- Location & arenas (with their internal rules);
- Narrative patterns;
- Charting;
- Media system solutions.

Some of these topics will be deeply analyzed in the next chapters of the book, but is it important here to shortly describe them (leaving the concept for the end of the comment).

As for the genre or narrative genres of reference, it should be observed how transmedia makes an extensive of them and considers them absolutely privileged tentpoles. Narrative genres with their rules and their recurring themes can provide the authors with cosy shelters, definite rules for their narratives and imaginative basins easy to be recognized for multiple transmedia audiences to such extent that in a project it is even possible to contaminate two or more narrative genres, but never shift

19. *World making* is referred to story worlds while *world building* is related to the universe creation, in transmedia theorization.

them from one platform to another, unless one wants to risk the overall solidity of the nebula of the narrative and thus irritate the most dramaturgically active and cunning fans. In this view, we might, for instance, use classic science fiction in an asset of the narrative and give psychological thriller priority onto another platform (as is the case with the TV series *Black Mirror*), but not develop settings and atmospheres taken from traditional science fiction shifting them simultaneously on steampunk or cyberpunk in the different media of the communication system.

For what concerns the characters – a subject we will deal with in the following chapter – taking for a moment their portraying, conflicts and arc aside, it is of crucial importance in the process of creation of the story world to pay a peculiar attention to their inner hierarchies and to the role they play. The minor character of a given asset of the project might be able to become, for example, the primary mouthpiece (spokesperson) in another platform. A protagonist might as well remain so in all the stories of the communicative system, or an antagonist may take the most important role in a future chapter of the story.

The same can be said about locations in the story world, that in transmedia becomes *arenas* where the producer can arrange characters and, at the same time, priority settings of a given platform, both in terms of artworks and in the experiences the communicative system can provide. In this context, for example, on two different planets, day and night might have a different duration or not exist at all and one can propose to the audience to experiment the former through an app and the latter in an urban game with teams set in a real city reproducing metaphorically the city of the narrative. In transmedia, therefore, unlike in traditional storytelling, the *charting* of the narrative universe (through maps, diagrams, and forms of static display, in motion graphics or interactive), the narrative pattern used to tell the single tale (which shall be the subject of the next chapter of this book) and a first definition of media channels activated by the

basic communicative system of the project are an integral part in the creation of the story world. An example?

The series *Glee* is one of the most relevant TV shows and teen phenomenon (2009-2010) and the first example of “music storytelling” spread by a transmedia bouquet. The story is focused on the evolution of a group of smart, talented teenagers who try, thanks to the efforts of some professors, to become famous singers in their college choir. The communicative system consists in a TV series aired by Fox, a *Glee* Live tour in 2010 and 2011 in the US and Canada, an app and two video games, an official website and social network profiles, music editions and fan-branded activities.

In the world making of the series, all turns around the central role of music used as an integral part of the narrative construction. As Orange transmedialab.org reports, in fact, in *Glee*: “the music represents an original way of enriching the narration: strong emotional moments are told through song, the music highlights the key moments of the story. For example, a mystery is played out in a song in one episode, in another, the resolution is revealed through a music video. The characters interpret hundreds of familiar tunes with talent. An approach that brings a third layer of signification for the audience of *Glee* is the internalization of the music interpreted by the key characters of the series. Ryan Murphy, the series’ creator, declared that the music is an integral part of the script’s development: “Each episode has a main theme; just after writing the story, I’ll choose the songs that will help me move ahead”.²⁰

Each platform, even those who didn’t contribute to the storytelling of the series, were involved in the world making of *Glee* and respected this fundamental rule. *Glee Karaoke Revolution*, for instance, and the two video games (for Wii and Nintendo) don’t enriched the story but represent a new entry points into the series’ musical universe. Players, as the characters of *Glee*,

20. <http://www.transmedialab.org>

could face the dream of being the stars of a show, and the same happened with the application *Glee Karaoke* produced by Smule for apple devices. The player sang and the app slightly adjusted his voice to give the illusion of being a pop star. Players could share their songs with their friends on Facebook, Twitter or through email, too.



Img. 1.13 *Glee* (2009-11). Platforms, content and visual of the TV series.

The official website of *Glee* was the main asset of the world making of the series and hosted quizzes, behind the scenes, games, tutorials, virtual photo booths, bonuses and catch up episodes. A world which created as sort of music epidemic on Facebook, Twitter (each character had his own Facebook and Twitter profile), Youtube and Hulu. Part of the world making were, finally, the compilation: *Glee: The music* and two special

editions *Glee: The Music Presents The Warblers* and *Glee: The Music. The Power Of Madonna*, edited by Columbia Records.

Although it is not considered as an example of pure transmedia²¹, *Glee*'s story world did exploit all its platforms with the aim of creating transmedia interactions in its multiple audiences, and has – over time – fostered the creation of communities (the gleers) and flashmobs presenting choreographies shared and used all over the world. The centrality of music itself has worked as a technological blender, a universal synthetic structure and a narrative and participate language.

ORIGINAL, COMBINED AND TRANSCODED CONCEPTS

Every imaginative universe has a *trigger* (primer), a *theme* and a *tone* which find their expression as a whole in the concept of its story world. The concept of a narrative, of a campaign, a product or a service contains in itself the germ, the narrative urgency and the basic message of a transmedia project. In this sense we can define three forms of concept from which as many story worlds derive:

- *original*;
- *combined*;
- *transcoded*.

In the original concepts, the authors create concepts and story worlds drawing them exclusively out of their own imagery. Original 'narrative ecosystems' grant their creators the widest degree of freedom and yet, at the same time are very demanding towards the public in terms of faith and interpretative cooperation²² with the narrator. How is it possible to buy such a strong and immediate faith? First of all creating an *imaginative pidgin* to be shared between medium and audience, that is to say

21. Pullman, S., *Glee: positive associations and fun evangelism*, accessed August 30, 2010, transmithology.com

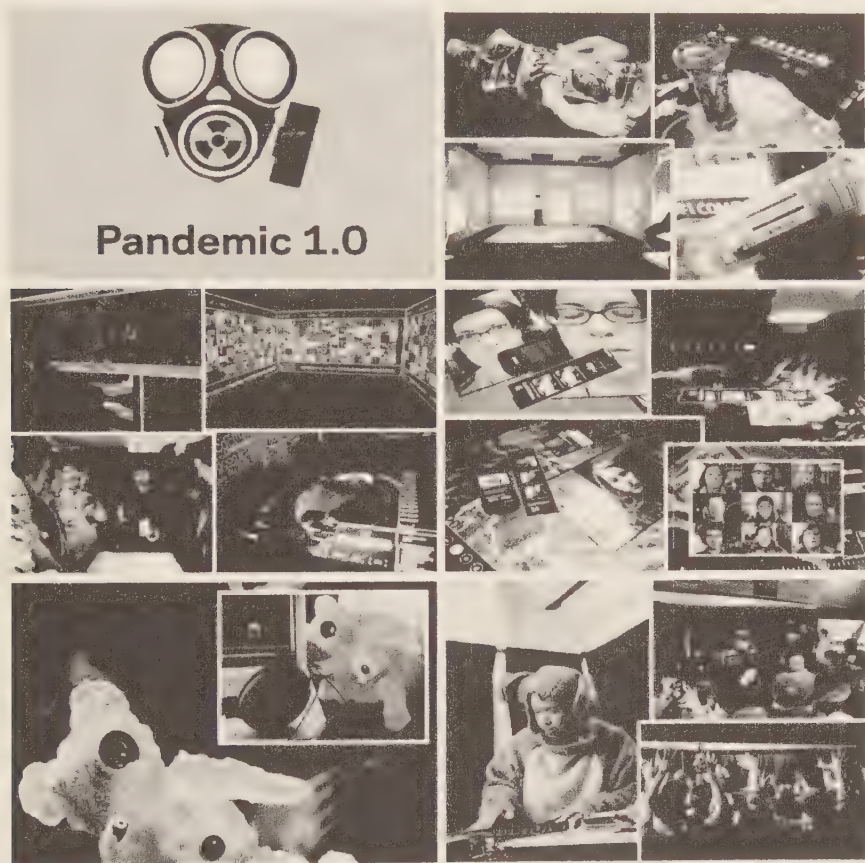
22. Eco, U., *Lector in fabula*, 1979.

simultaneously with all the media and all the multiple audiences of the project. Then filling the narrative with trials and rewards, imaginative hooks and interactive spaces, in all the media which make the communicative system. Spaces, moments and actions the consumers' imagination shall devote to the reconstruction of the universe of the narrative. An example?

In January 2011 the news of a weird pandemic spreads throughout Park City, in the snow-capped mountains of Ohio. The city is hectic for at that time of the year, just like every year, it is about to become the home to Robert Redford's Sundance Film Festival. One of the short films screened during the festival has sent a warning, though: there's a virus infecting adults and the youth will have to eradicate it! With only 120 hours left...

Pandemic 1.0 is an example of immersive transmedia storytelling created by independent filmmaker Lance Weiler. It played out for 40.000 festival attendees during the event itself and for over 250.000 online players all over the world. Film, mobile, online, social gaming, print and real world interactions, so many were the possible access points enabling the audience to enter the universe of the story although there is one point which soon reveals itself to be the most important: 50 golden objects and 50 bottles of water that are vital in order to succeed in such a venture were hidden in locations close to the festival. Online players and festival attendees had to co-operate in order to find the items, on the ground of clues present in the movie and using a mobile phone part of customized kits. The task was to shoot a photograph to people who have their eyes shut, build a story around it and bring it to the "Mission Control" set up in town, where an interactive board was to store all the content created by the players. Participants' role was to contribute to the reduction of the number of people infected, while the pictures with eyes shut were to be stored in a virtual cemetery and associated to each single story by those who knew the victims who, in their turn, will have helped save a life. Four special toys were distributed at the location: they look like plastic bears but they

have an in-built video-camera, an MP3 reader, a projector and can be connected to a computer and a laptop. In the last day of the pandemic, and thanks to those tools, it was possible to access a secret location of the festival where, once the virus was fought off, an exclusive party branded *Pandemic 1.0* with live online broadcasting to be watched by all virtual participants of the project was to be thrown.



Img. 1.14 Pandemic 1.0 (2011). The project's cover. The bottles and other objects spread all over in the festival locations. The Mission Control. The Victims Cemetery. The Multimedia bear and the game's final party.

Those, on the other hand, deriving from pre-existent universes, called *matrix*,²³ are defined combined concepts and story worlds. Combined concepts do not replicate the same narrative formulas of their predecessors, but they hybridize it until they create a new narrative form which can be spread both over the same media and on different ones. Depending on how close the matrix is to the original narrative we can in this case speak of *adaptation*, *extension* or *expansion*. As it synthetically stated in *Storytelling Across Worlds* (2013): "Adaptation retells the story told in one medium in another, with applicable changes depending on the requirements of the new medium [...]. Extension draw from the narrative element of the original source story and includes new narrative elements that build directly on the pre-existing material, but does not extensively introduce new story elements. [...] Expansion broadens the story, introducing parallel or companion narratives that often provide new perspectives, insight or clarity to the existing story. As a process, this is developing new story material that's inspired by the original narrative universe"²⁴. In transmedia history we can find countless cases of adaptations; many of them successful, some others not. For example, in the transmedia bouquet of the franchise of *Mass Effect* the videogame, the novel *Mass Effect: Deception* written by William Dietz anticipated the release of the videogame *Mass Effect 3* but was immediately condemned by the franchise's fans which created a 16-page Google doc to list and correct all the biological, technological and cultural mistakes done by the writer. The continuity of *Mass Effect* itself was damaged by the situation, and both the publisher of the video game (Bio Ware) and of the novel (Del Rey) had to apologize with their multiple audiences for that disastrous adaptation.

Moreover, combined concepts can more likely lead to the creation of transmedia portmanteaux, rather than actual

23. It is important not to confuse the *matrix* and the *canon*, which stand for the sum of all the official contents of a transmedia franchise/property

24. Dowd, T., Fry, M., Niederman, M., Steiff, J., *Storytelling Across Worlds...* cit., p. 22-23.

franchises. In this case too I shall present with an example drawn from personal experience.

By crossbreeding French TV format *Camera Cafè*, one made of short comedy sketches shot with a fixed camera, the famous American sitcom *Friends* and in-depth news programmes for motorbike lovers, in 2010 I created the transmedia portmanteau *Monster Caffè*, targeted for lovers of motorbikes and *bon vivre*. The primary asset of the project²⁵ was a multistrend TV series²⁶ made of 12 episodes 15 minutes each with 8 fixed characters, that is unrepentant singles and young professionals struggling with everyday problems all staged at Rome's Monster Caffè, owned by the protagonist, a goofy young man leveraged to the hilt. The TV series was paralleled by 12 episode, 2 minutes each web series dedicated in particular to expert motorbikers and focused on the story of one of the characters, an ex-pilot "frozen" by a nasty accident. Secondary assets of the portmanteau: a website with games and soundbites (noises of different engines by brands), an iPhone app, an online puzzle game on Facebook, an artbook and several events with VIP and guests from the Superbike world set in Rome's Ducati Caffè, the true location of the series. An example of combined concept and at the same time the first portmanteau especially thought for Italian motorcycle lovers who were single.

The outcome of the transformation of ideas derived from other areas of communication, concept and story world may be transcoded and modified in the transition between a language and another, or between a reality and another, and this can happen thanks to the use of different media. The result is an hybrid form (*complex*) between franchise and portmanteau: the

25. According to Damon Lindelof and Carlton Cuse experience on the *LOST* transmediaverse, the primary asset of the transmedia bouquet is called *mothership*. It is the most important content delivered by the most important asset of the communicative system of the project (for example, for *LOST*, the mothership was the TV show).

26. *Multistrend* is meant to be a narration containing in itself more narrative registers at the same time such as, in the example of *Monster Caffè*, comedy, drama, *melò*.



Img. 1.15 *Monster Caffè* (2010) Screenshots from the opening theme and the backstage of the first episode of the portmanteau.

editorial shift that results from such transformation appears to be peculiarly powerful in terms of advertising. Let us come forth with two examples here too.

2012 London Olympics were called the first transmedial 'social olympic games' in history because of the interaction of three projects created on the social networks by the games' main sponsors: Coca-Cola, Samsung and Visa. Let's analyze them in a sequence, although they went "on stage" simultaneously. Coca-Cola created a campaign called *Move to the Beat of London*, which was made of more than 100 multiplatform contents which celebrated the city in its longstanding musical and multi-ethnic tradition. This was made through video and jingles connected to the athletes; there was also the possibility to play it live as if it were a musical instrument, a multimedia installation (the BeatBox Pavillion) implemented inside the olympic village. Visa,

in its turn, created the *Go World* campaign, aiming at connecting fans to the more unknown athletes of the games. They created a Team Visa, published video and content on social networks which were tailored on the single athletes who were then to be 'adopted' by the public on Facebook, just like actual characters of a story. Last but not least, Samsung focused on the technological aspects of the Olympics with its *Samsung Genome Project*, a Facebook game which was questioning the fans on the issue of whether they were an 'olympic type' and to what extent. All this after having followed live online the passage of the torch in the city and having published – always on the social networks – people made videos and content during an urban quest.

The result? A very effective example of transcodification of the old live TV Olympics with real time communication on the social networks and the web, with images and messages spread all over different technological platforms and real life experiences translated differently according to the brand and the medium chosen by the user.

The second example is that of *The Walking Dead*, the action/horror TV serial drama developed in 2010 by director Frank Darabont, based on Robert Kirkhman's successful comic book series. The story tells about an American sheriff who wakes up from a coma in an post apocalyptic future to find the world infested by dangerous zombies. In his desperate search for his family he gets in touch with a bunch of survivors, joins them and start a deadly open war against the living dead, and not only. *The Walking Dead* became "a transmedia storytelling property with the release of Episode 1 of the episodic video game series in april 2012. The story presented in the videogame parallels the start of the comic and television series and provides a somewhat different perspective on events".²⁷

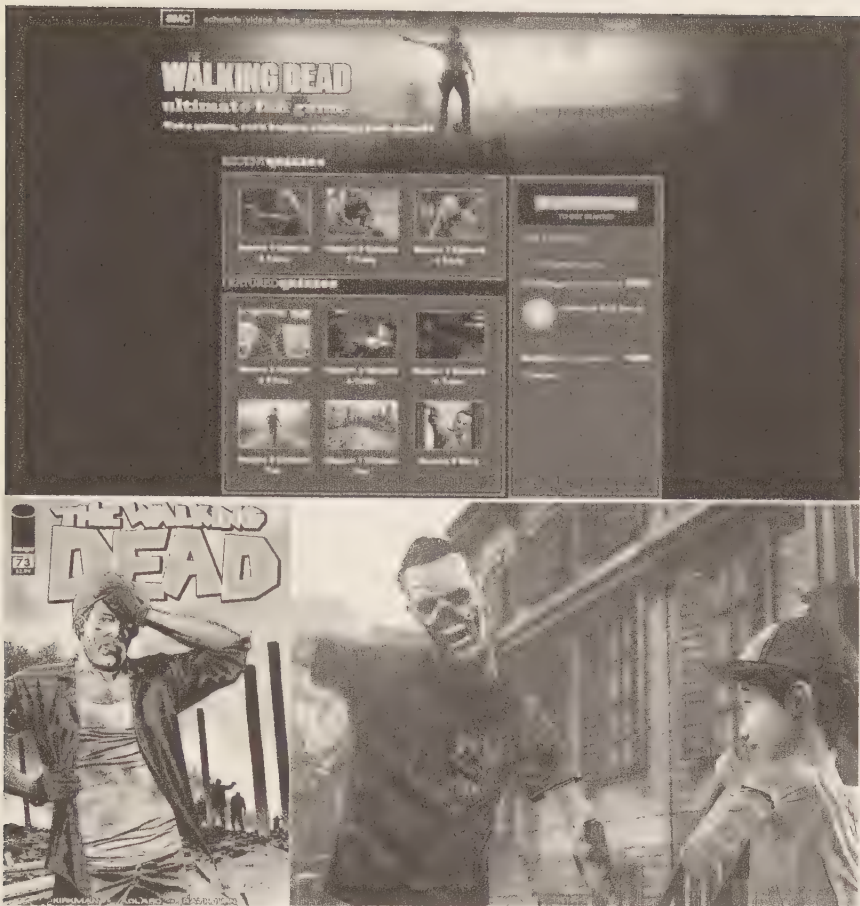
The TV narrative tended to expand the series' transcoded concept by adding new characters and different locations which

27. Dowd, T., Fry, M., Niederman, M., Steiff, J., *Storytelling Across Worlds...* cit., p. 193.

weakened the universal synthetic structures that could be found in the comics (i.e. the strategies used to kill zombies, the borderline spaces between humans and non-humans, the narrative Zero Time, and so on...). The result was that two webseries (*The Walking Dead: Tom Apart* and *The Walking Dead: Cold Storage*) were created during the first two seasons; they narrated the mysterious spreading of the epidemics and were aimed at strengthening the imaginative isotopes of the story, giving them a "Romero flavour". A talk show, *Talking Dead*, where presenter Chris Hardwick hosting fans and part of the technical and artistic cast of the series in his studio, and a fake zombie invasion performed in 26 big American cities and broadcasted live simultaneously in 120 countries were also created during the first two seasons.

Archetipal figures of the narrative were obviously its characters, perfectly fitted into Jung's archetypes: the Hero, the Shadow the Con and the Shapeshifter, and at the same time awakened the most intimate, sadistic and open pulsions of the series' 'participants consumers'²⁸ who were made akin by quoting a common movie imagery inspired by the title (which recalled the 1936 Michael Curtiz movie, death walking towards the audience and towards the entire mankind) and by spreading on all the media platforms involved into the project (TV, web, comics, physical space and video games). All the language and narrative transformations, the use of integrated platforms and simple and yet very powerful imagery suggestions have granted *The Walking Dead* a major success still today, making it one of the most successful transcoded story worlds of the planet.

28. The involvement Kozinets refers to is expressed both in terms of active participation and of capacity of proposing novelties in relation to a brand's imaginative universe, as we can read in Kozinets, R.V., *F-Tribalized Marketing. The Strategic Implications of Virtual Communities of Consumption*, in: "European Management Journal" (1999), pp. 252-264.



Img. 1.16 The Walking Dead (2010). Transmedia materials. Above, the page with quizzes and games for fans in the series' official website. Down, one of the comics which inspired the narrative and a screenshot from the video game.

WORKSHOP 1 – UNIVERSE CREATION

Choose a story to be transformed into a transmedia project. Set the imaginative universe of your narrative, its nebula and start panning down the story world. Verify whether your concept is an original one, a combined or transcoded. Verify its structure and all the narrative variables we have seen in this chapter. Deepen the story's imaginative dimension checking on its universal

synthetic structures, the imaginative isotopes and the archetypal figures. Then put all aside to be used at the end of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2

STORY DESIGN

Being clear what it means to manipulate imaginative universes and story worlds which were purposely created to be developed on different media platforms within transmedia projects, it is now time to dive full body into the narrative, to dig into plots, characters and actions that make our stories. Time to unveil their secrets and show them in the most effective fashion to the multiple audiences interacting in our communicative system.

The first thing to do is to define the narrative forms in the main medium (*mothership*) and later focus on those of the other assets of our communicative system. Then we will have to go deeper into and define the structure, or *dramatic skeleton* of each individual story. At a later moment time relations between stories in the different media shall be defined and their subject deepened. Last it will be necessary to portray and make an outline of characters in the narrative ecosystem with their psychological profiles. Yet, let us focus on one thing at the time, keeping in mind – when necessary – basic elements of narratology used by traditional storytelling and yet also crucial at this stage of our work in transmedia story world. In an attempt of summarizing at its best the structuralist theory, we shall point out how a story must first have the two ‘C’s, that is *conflict* (between characters) and internal *change* (inner in its status or in its protagonist). This is the first essential guideline useful to

define the 'form' of the narrative structure in the main medium of our communicative system.

THE STORY CRAFTING PROCESS

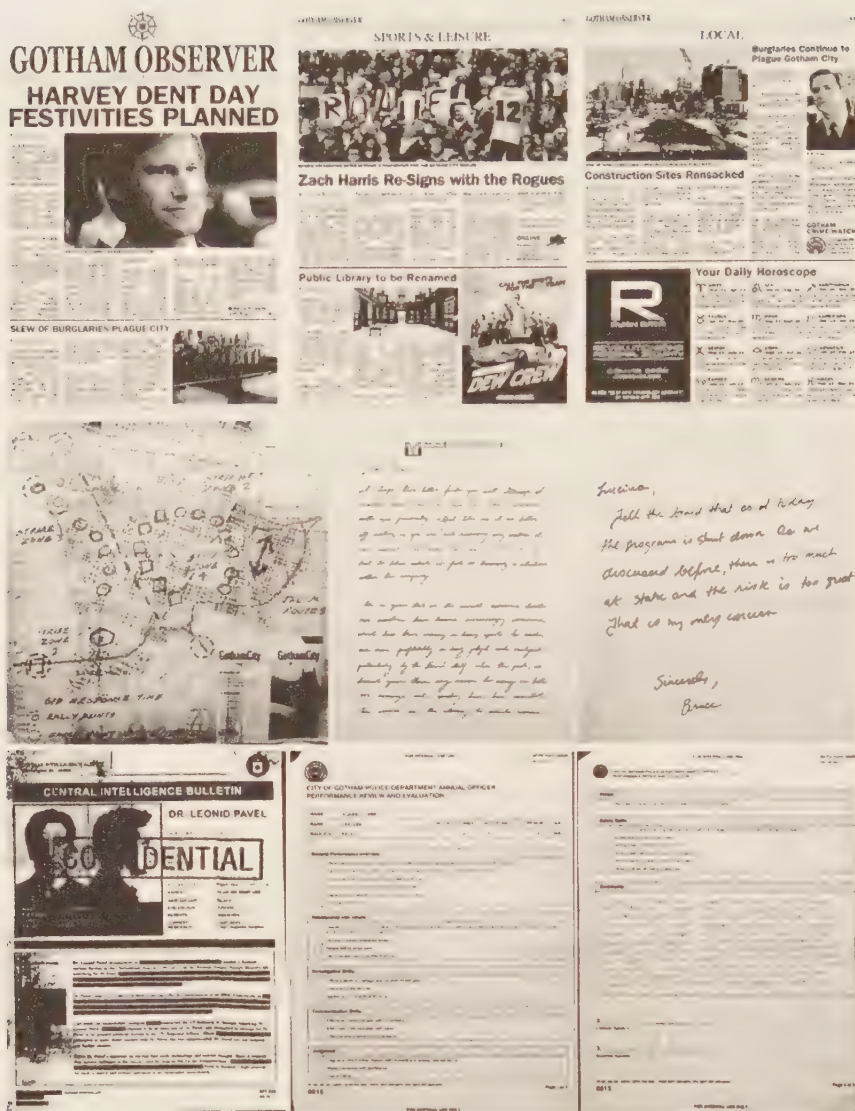
Defining 'form' in a story world depends on the different types of narrative structures one can find in the communicative system.

Structure of the tale, incipit and ending are the most important steps of this story crafting process and belong to any form of storytelling. They however become of a higher importance in the step of planning a transmedia narrative when, for example, the ending of a story may become the hook for the incipit of another tale on a different platform, or when the structure of a story may work as a model for all the others of a given project. An example? The launch of the final chapter of the 2010 movie saga *The Dark Knight Rises*, whose premiere in cinema theatres was anticipated by Warner Bros. by an alternate reality game. It came to represent a communicative system mainly based on the web which produced textual and visual content published on social networks and superheroes loving communities both virally and in a non-linear fashion. How?

Documents presented as classified, 'stolen' and inaccessible were published in the months before the release of the film on seemingly secondary or marginal websites. The first content to be released was a special issue of "The Gotham Observer", whose front page gave the news of the celebrations for the death of Gotham City's protector, Harvey Dent, the same event that was to trigger the story in the film. A number of articles on the newspaper were also giving clues which would be acknowledged in the movie: the works at the city stadium, the objective of the villain's – the dreadful Bane – terroristic attack, or the news of the rise of robberies and of the first cracks in Dent's repressive system to dam Gotham's overflowing corruption. Following this, other 'materials' were diffused on the net, at regular interval over the following weeks. First a city map with spots circled red where mysterious diggings were taking place, then Lucius

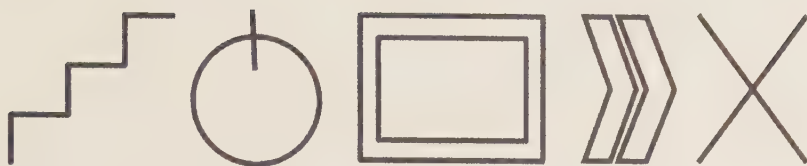
Fox's letter to his old friend Bruce Wayne telling him the family company was in dire straits, with also the president's reply stating he was refusing to shake the dust off an old plan for a nuclear reactor to save himself and the company. Eventually other documents were released: a report from Gotham intelligence on Professor Leonid Pavel – a nuclear physicist mysteriously gone missing – and GCPD officer John Blake's personal files (the future Robin and one frequently reprimanded for acting the vigilante). Those documents and images created a notable teaser effect on Batman's fans and represent a valid synthesis of the work carried out by the authors of the movie's advertising campaign on the so far discussed narrative plans: the imaginative universe (Batman and Gotham), the story world (the relationship between Lucius and Bruce, Bruce and John, which also reveal new details about the plot), and the incipit and endings of some narrative lines (the map to play with, the report on the missing scientist...). All those elements were used to arouse the public's curiosity, involve them in an active way by making them learn those news from social networks and the press, rework and share all over the world.

In crafting the tale of a story world there are mainly five types of narrative structure authors and producers can use: *step*, *ring*, *frame*, *pierce* and *mixed*. In the stepped structure the narrative progresses one stage at a time, closing every scene before opening the following one (as it is – for instance – in traditional fairy tales). In the ringed structure the first and the last scene of a tale juxtapose; in the space between the two the rest of the story is narrated. The example might be that of a long flashback like in Robert Zemeckis's *Forrest Gump*. The frame structure temporarily nestles a tale within another in the course of the narrative (as it is for James Cameron's *Titanic*), while the pierce structure is when the tale moves seamlessly forward stage after stage: the previous is not exhausted yet and already the protagonist is thrown into the following (the example is that of David Fincher's *Seven*). Last, the mixed structure results from the contamination of two or more structures among those just discussed (as for example



Img. 2.1 The Dark Knight Raises (2012). Viral online materials in the transmedia alternate reality game of the movie.

Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*). All of those types of structure may be contaminated or hybridized in terms of space and time, either concurrently or at different stages in transmedia story worlds, as I am going to show in the following example.



Img. 2.2 Icons of the five types of structure: step, ring, frame, pierce and mixed.

During a night at a disco, A, B and C, three youths of a small town, get involved in a murder. The police finds no evidence sufficient to incriminate them and, after the turmoil following the initial steps of the investigation, they decide for a change of scene. Up to this point the narration is made through a single medium: episode one of a TV series (presenting with a step structure). A and B move to different cities where they find different jobs and slowly lost touch with each other. Their rapport is solely entrusted with stories published on two e-books the audience can read in real time to learn about updates. C, on the other hand, walks a path of his own, until the two friends (A and B) discover he was the culprit. The public follows his tread through a three episode frame structured m-series. Then A and B start a highly daring manhunt to catch C before he disappears; here the tale's structure turns into a pierce one. The two youths know where he is heading and they decide not to give the police any information but try to clear their own name by themselves. The story of their detection comes back on television where it ends until someone, one of the characters or the anchor man himself, will start to tell us (using the ring structure).

Once the structure of the different asset is set, it is time to deal with that of each single story. For each tale we shall have to find the start (*incipit*) and the ending (*explicit*) of its storyline. For what concerns the beginning, three different types can be taken into consideration: *traditional*, *in medias res* and *in retrospect*.

With traditional incipit the beginning of the story and that of the narrative occur at the same time (Once upon a time...); the *in medias res* incipit is when the beginning of the narrative occurs during the course of the events told in the story (for example a gun shooting A and B are involved in at the beginning of the story), while we have the retrospect incipit when the narrative starts after the events have taken place, events which are recalled when the story is already concluded (for instance events told by C after he is arrested by the police with A and B's help).

Finally, about choosing the ending, it is useful to remind how it can alternatively be *open*, *closed*, *surprise* or *double (repeated)*. The closed ending happens when all the events in the story cease their course (positively, with a *happy ending*, or negatively, with a *dramatic ending*); the open ending – on the contrary – leave the main narrative line open; the surprise ending hides a twist in the events which can make the public's point of view on the story dramatically change. Eventually, the double or repeated ending terminates the different narrative threads of a tale through different scenes (an example can be found with choral narratives, when the story follows more characters at the same time). These traditional rules of narratology – as well as others – remain basically unaltered in their inner nature but, in the case of transmedia narratives, they undergo substantial mutations. In order to make this concept more simple it will be helpful to come back to and develop the story of A, B and C and the small town murder. In the case of a closed ending A and B will live happily ever after, while C shall die in a gun shooting (dramatic ending). In an open ending A and B shall live in constant fear of C's revenge, who escaped his former friends framing and police investigations. In the third case the public will discover – with great surprise – that B was the real murderer, although C couldn't reveal this without putting A's life at jeopardy. If the story ends with a double or repeated ending, we shall tell how A is going back to his small town life, B is staying in the big city to start a new life and have a brighter future, while C shall face his destiny, chased by the police. The use of a transmedia project

whose main features are decided from the beginning might give to opportunity to present with more alternative, simultaneous endings, even a different one on each platform. Or, also, direct the platforms towards the building up of the same ending, although in different timings. Alternatively, tell *post eventum* what ending the three characters would have liked to be their own ending, or leave it to the public, perhaps establishing a contest with prizes, to create an ending within few days from the project release.

The story crafting process is a very useful operation to establish the time and space boundaries of a transmedia story world: it can be compared to the definition of the perimeter and the foundation of a building. The more a story crafting is solid and well balanced, the more effective long-running the whole of the tales within our project's communicative system shall be. The making of the meaning and the crafting of a correct interaction among all the stories set – or that may be set, also in the future – in our imaginative universe are at stake here.

THE TRANSMEDIA DRAMATIC SKELETON

If we go deeper down the narrative matter of a story world, we end up directly into the magma and the raw physiology of its stories. If we want to design the *dramatic skeleton* of a transmedia project we may find all the traditional narrative pattern of writing and screenwriting to be of some use, and yet they shall soon turn out to be insufficient and in need of being integrated and hybridized. The most common contamination is that between the three-act structure theorized by Syd Field in 1991, and the narrative paradigm of the Transformational Arc of the protagonist, elaborated by Dara Marks in 2007. While the three-act narrative model follows the protagonist's experience in its major keypoints, such as:

- the *ordinary world* at the beginning;
- the *first turning poing*, or the narrative trigger;

- the *point of no-return*, in the middle of the narrative (mid-point);
- the *second turning point*, leading to the ending;
- the narrative's final *climax* (either positive or negative),

Dara Marks's model¹ concentrates, on the other hand on the inner development process lived during the tale by the main character of the story, either in the main plot (interpreted through the events – obstacles, further problems, strokes of luck... – experienced by the character) than in the subplots of the story world (the primary subplot of the story, which consists of the relations intentionally or unintentionally created by the character – love, hate, friendship... – and the secondary subplot, which is the process of inner – positive or negative – transformation of the character).

Moreover, considering this paradigm, the resistance process of a character follows a series of steps that starts from a *fatal flaw* (an essential lacking quality, fatal mistake or unbearable condition) in the beginning, and goes through an *awakening* (the character is not completely aware of a new situation created by an unexpected event) until the first turning point of the tale, and then through an *enlightenment* (a complete awareness of the inner conflict) in the midpoint of the story. Then, the release process through which the character faces, matures and accepts his own *transformational arc*, allows him to pass from the midpoint to the second turning point of the tale, proceeding from a status of *grace* towards a *fall*. Following this fall, he arrives to face death at the climax of the story. This is the point in which the transformational moment of the character starts, and it finishes his transformational arc. All these passages, in most of cases, are developed through a mainstream narrative, but in the transmedia

1. The paradigm of the transformational arc of the character was elaborated in 2007 by American editor Dara Marks; it represents an evolution of Syd Field's development of the Aristotelian three-act structure, with three different levels of reading. See: D. Marks, *The Transformational Arc*, 2007.

tales they inevitably have to be “gradually” shared with the audiences throughout the different media involved in the communication system. An example?

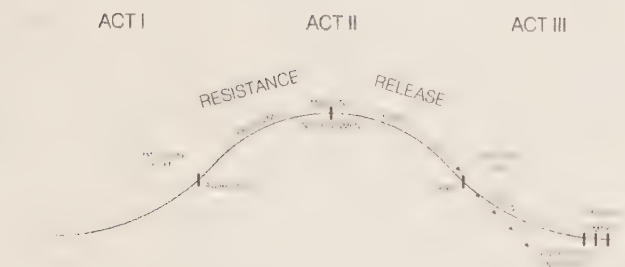
Between 1982 and 1985, on the English magazine “Warrior” there was a weekly strip publication of *V for Vendetta*, a tale written by Alan Moore and illustrated by David Lloyd. A few years later, the several publications of this comic were collected in a graphic novel which, in 2005, was released as a movie directed by James McTeigue, based on a screenplay by Andy and Larry Wachowski. Comics, novels and movies all accurately defined the nebula of the imaginative universe: an uchrony within a post-nuclear setting, in a future ruled by an Orwellian and obscure fascist regime (as in 1984) with catastrophic corruptions drawn from Ray Bradbury (*Fahrenheit 451*).



Img. 2.3 *V for Vendetta* (2005). Visuals from the movie, the comic series and the Anonymous movement.

In the story, the plot and the secondary subplots are focused on the protagonist V, who survived a terrible concentration camp and is now determined to take revenge by killing his jailors. Meanwhile, he arranges a “final” attack on the offices of the regime (*plot*). But one night, V meets the young Evey, a lonely girl marginalized as he is, with whom he becomes infatuated; she will stand by him until the end of the tale (*primary subplot*). Moreover, thanks to her, when V dies, his desire for justice spreads to the whole population: by putting on his mask – the one which belonged to Guy Fawkes, an anti-monarchic conspirator who, in 1605, planned the bombing of the English Parliament – the population will finally begin to fight against the regime (*secondary subplot*). All the stages of the pattern of V’s character transformational arc can be found both in the graphic novel and in the movie, from resistance to the awakening, from the status of grace to the final climax and resolution of the tale. However, in contrast to the graphic novel, in the movie: imprisonment and all the other processes of existential friction are only slightly mentioned, while the imprisonment he imposes on the young girl, to make her follow his passage from life to death, seems to be more violent and detailed. However, even with some internal variations, the paradigm of the transformational arc in *V for Vendetta* was used again for the launch of the movie, for the advertising campaign of the book (on paper press magazines, on Web...), in the novel by Steve Moore (2007) based on the movie’s script and in its theater adaptations (for example, the one on stage in Sweden in 2006); they all confirm the tale as a symbolic example of transmedia narrative focused on the transformational arc of the protagonist, ready to be recreated by the emergent “communities of knowledge” organized in fandoms of an even more tactical, temporary and intentional kind.

What happens, though, if we were to use the outcome of the *hybridation* of three-act model with that of the transformation arc in the definition of a transmedia story world? Let us assume we have a low complex story world to work on, spread over three



Img. 2.4 The three-act narrative structure crossed with that of the transformational arc of the protagonist. Different fonts – bold, caps and lowercase – signal the main different passages as described by Syd Field and Dara Marks.

platforms and let us use again the story of our friends A, B and C and their small town crime.

Let us restart from the days immediately after the murder, when C goes visiting his parents up North and he disappeared. A and B, on the contrary, end up in the big city: the former becomes a secretary in a legal firm, the latter a clerk in a shopping mall. They slowly lose touch with each other because they secretly suspect one another (*fatal flaw*).

Let us start from here and build our three-tracks dramatic skeleton. A and B's life goes on smoothly until one day they watch the news on TV where a report reveals them an important detail about the crime (awakening: to be revealed, for example, in the e-books we have mentioned before). The two friends try to reconnect to each other, they meet in a bar and together they make a reconstruction of the true events of that night. And they have it all clear (enlightenment, to be dealt with in depth in the TV series). Eventually, despite A's hesitations (resistance, to be revealed through in his e-book), they decide to start chasing C in order to clear their own names (and here we get to the tale's mid-point, in all the three assets). They then discover where C hides

(grace, to be told in a breath-taking sequence of the m-series), but, after having tried to frame him, they cannot catch him and have to start all over again (*fall*, in the TV series). With the aim of compensating the previous failure, B (whom we know being the real murderer) decides to give the 'manhunt' a strong boost and such a move brings him and A to the second turning point of the narrative, the one that closes the second act of the story (in all the assets of the project). The following step is therefore that of the death-match between the three youths (climax) which puts A's redemption under the spotlight. On the very top of the heat, in fact, A brings up what C has done (transformational moment, to be developed in the TV series), but at the end of a final confrontation she will discover that C is innocent. She and C get then rid of their sense of impotence and finally gain awareness of their new reality (to be told in the e-book's last story). B shall end up in prison and A and C will never go back to their small town. They do not belong to that past anymore and perhaps the time to give their new relationship in the big city has come. All is ready for the ending (resolution) of the three stories in the different media involved.

Finally, in building the dramatic skeleton of a transmedia narrative it is important to consider how the moments when the public's imagination reaches its most productive state are two: the *incipit* and the *first turning point*; in other words the 'once upon a time' and the first turn of events, the one physically triggering the narrative. In those moments all is still virtually possible and the platforms involved into the narrative are still 'open' and pointing towards any narrative point: choices are virtually countless. Also, at the first turning point of the story the audience shifts directly from pre-vision, when they imagine the story, to active involvement and emotional participation. This is the moment when the audience enter the tale and 'something for them' decides if a given narrative is seducing them or if it is leaving them indifferent, if it fascinates or repulse them, if it increases or disenchants their desire to consume the story. This is the moment when, if the author works effectively, the public

will want to ‘take the first leap’ from a medium to the other of the project.

On the contrary, at the second turning point (the one marking the passage from the second to the third act of the story) the audience’s *suspension of disbelief*² and their capacity of interpretation have inevitably become more passive and the situation gets even worse while we approach to the final climax of the story. Now it is too late to stimulate the public into active participation, while there are still strong chances of involve them through strong narrative content and touchpoints connecting a media to another. The public, loyal to the show by now, is hungry for knowledge about details and side-stories and they will accept to postpone the story’s ending, only to get there with a satisfactory load of information and a comprehensive idea of the narrative and imaginative perspectives of the whole tale. What happens, on the other hand, if our story world is based on a non-linear narrative, or a serial narrative, spread on more media? In order to systematize all the stories and their media platforms, we should first ask ourselves:

- are the stories self-conclusive or are they just parts of a serial story world (for example are thy *prequel* or *sequel*, *pre-series* or *after-series*)³?
- does the story world present with secondary narrative spaces enabling it to create other stories within (*spin*

2. The *suspension of disbelief* is a concept that comes from Samuel Taylor Coleridge (*Bibliographia Literaria*, 1817) and refers to “the reader’s willingness to accept the author’s vision of a time, place, world or character that, were they not in a work of fiction, would be unbelievable. The audience has to be willing to put aside the fantastical, the incongruous, the unlikely and even excuse narrative shortcuts or streamlining in order to accept and be engaged by the story”. Ref. to: Dowd, T., Fry, M., Niederman, M., Steiff, J., *Storytelling Across Worlds...* cit., p. 21.

3. The concepts define episodes which, in a saga, *precede* or *follow* the story originally told; respectively, in single tales (*prequel*, *sequel*) or serially (*pre-series*, *after-series*).

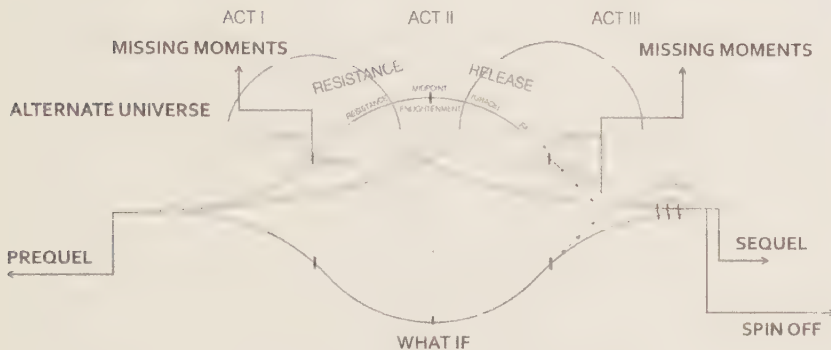
*off*⁴, *reboot*⁵, *what if*⁶, *missing moments*⁷) or outside (*alternate universe*⁸) its imaginative universe?

- does the story world present with secondary narrative content enabling it to attract other stories (*out of character*⁹, *untold stories*) into its imaginative universe?
- do stories involve the use of original characters, of protagonists from prior narratives (*cross-over*), or real people: VIPs, showbiz stars, etc... (*real person*)?

In the case of stories which do not 'live on their own', but which, on the contrary can be referred to sagas, myths or other participative narrative forms, transmedia narratives tend to repetition, re-tread, alteration and co-authoriality. Transmedia narratives modify space and time, interchange all the possible actions, suggest different worlds from the original and stimulate authors and public into a productive interaction with them, with

4. A *spin-off* is a narrative created by reworking background elements of a pre-existing narrative. It might exploit some parts of the story, characters or actors. For example, a videogame focusing on the character of Catwoman, from *The Dark Knight* saga, as it happens in *Batman: Arkham City*, produced by Rocksteady Studios for Warner Bros. in 2011.
5. A *reboot* of a serial narrative is a narrative which completely renews the original story, keeping only characters and imaginative universe intact, as it was, for instance, with many superheroes, from *Batman*, reworked in the new franchise *Il cavaliere oscuro*, to Sam Raimi's *Spiderman*, which has turned into *The Amazing Spiderman*, to *Superman* in the most recent *Man of Steel*.
6. A *what if* is a narrative which can be reconnected to a pre-existing narrative universe, but where the story is set in a different time or space from that of the original narrative. An example can be the frequent 'transport' of the *Star Trek* crew in the past on Earth, as it happened in the 1966 tv series.
7. A *missing moment* A missing moment is a story that tells about events in a different time or, or which might integrate the original tale, set in its imaginative universe. For example, the story of the life of Bella Swan before meeting with Edward, useful to find out more detail about the *Twilight* saga.
8. An *alternate universe* is a story which uses a pre-existing imaginary universe and introduces new characters into them. This is what, for example, J.K. Rowling has done transferring part of the Harry Potter imaginary into her 2016 *Fantastic Beasts*.
9. An *out of character* is a story which uses characters from a prior narrative and takes them outside their original imaginative universe. Raja Gosnell transporting a group of Smurfs in nowadays New York in his 2011 movie can be an example of it.

the narratives and with all the possible other digital spaces where to enjoy the stories. Here it is, therefore, the three-act dramatic skeleton we have introduced at the beginning of the chapter, as it would look like if the story world were made of serial narratives spread concurrently on more media.



Img. 2.5 Transmedia Dramatic Skeleton of a complex story world, made of different stories developing serially the imaginative universe of a narrative in space and time.

In order to finalize the design of the dramatic skeleton of the story world of a transmedia narrative a final step will be required: a check on the temporal sequence the stories present within the overall time of the narrative. From this point it is possible to adopt five different basic dramatic strategies:

- *sequential* narratives;
- *parallel* narratives;
- *simultaneous* narratives;
- *non-linear* narratives;
- *two way*.

Briefly recalling them in their essential features, it is useful to remind how sequential narratives see the different storylines of a tale following one another without juxtaposition of any sort. In simultaneous narratives, the storylines start and end sharing the same portion of the story spread on different media. The parallel narratives are when different storylines run side by side on different platforms. In non-linear narratives the different storylines are fragmented and then reassembled within their communicative system in disjointed sequences. Finally, in two-ways narrative, two or more storylines flow in opposite directions into the same narrative universe, allowing seekers, co-creators and audiences explore and enjoy the tale in both or just in one way, in the communicative system. As usual, an example.

Westworld is a ten episode science fiction western thriller series created for HBO in 2016. Written by Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy, the tale is inspired from Michael Crichton's *Westworld* (1973) and *Futureworld* (1976). In the plot, *Westworld* is a futuristic Wild West-themed amusement park visited by guests which interact with androids apparently without any risk and just as an entertainment experiences. But, as we all know, androids often suffer for reminiscences, dreams or unpredictable memories...

The nebula of the imaginative universe of the series mixes science fiction and fantasy lit (from Crichton's *Jurassic World* and from *Alice in Wonderland* in primis, both mentioned either in the images than in the dialogues) with videogames DNA and open worlds.

Game design is also a curious, useful perspective to deep into the narrative structure and in the characters' identity of the series, with titles like *Bioshock* and *Red Dead Redemption*, just to mention two of the most evident. The character of Maeve, one of the android, suffers the same identity conflict of Rachel in *Blade Runner*. Bernard, the strategist, is similar to *Hunger Games* *Catching Fire* Beetee (role acted by the same actor), two mentions of the series *Lost* were put in the tale (thanks to executive producer J.J. Abrams, creator of that series) and many *easter eggs*

and music tracks were seeded here and there often reminding us that “this isn’t a western, that this isn’t taking place in the 19th century. It’s taking place somewhere else – sometime else” as said its creator Jonathan Nolan. But how to help the audience in taking confidence with Delos corporation and its mysterious headquarter and employees, and how to bring the park to life? This has actually been the main result of the transmedia skeleton developed for the series. By forcing the audience to behave as if they were in the park, and making the ‘contact’ experience with the society since the beginning of the narrative as real as it could be, two experiences were created at the same time when the series was broadcasted: one online and one on virtual reality. They were focusing exactly on those two objectives and presented with similar features: they were simultaneous narratives, parallel and non-linear.

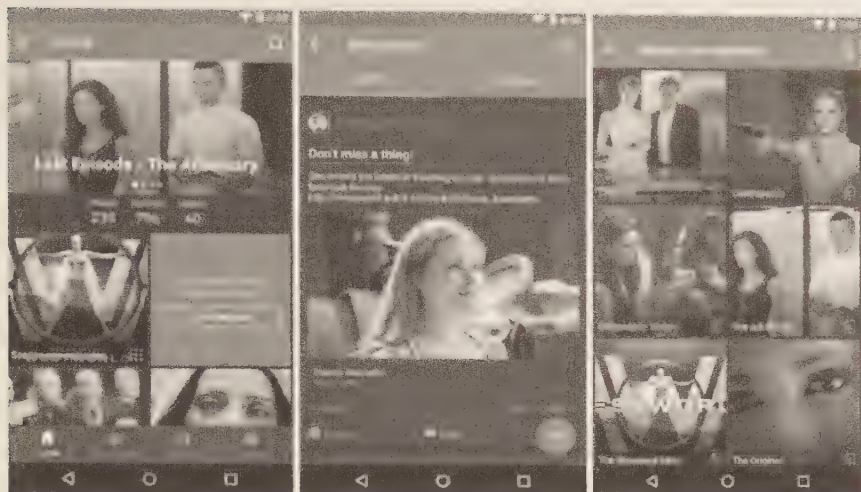
In Discoverwestworld.com, the official series website, the user was introduced to the experience by a virtual receptionist named Aeden, who answers every visitor’s question in a stated but brilliant an ironic way. Every answer digs the spectator into the philosophy of the series with phrases like: “The world is literally your playground. What would you like to do?” or “The technology at Westworld goes way beyond television. You can watch TV, but you can live Westworld”. Then, if the visitor typed in the access code topbar ‘Violentdelights’, he was automatically linked to Delos corporate website which contained private email, staff chat, a map of the headquarters building of the firm, and could explore some programmed storylines for Dolores, our new “Alice” and the main character of the tale. Then, in the same, first week, the dramatic skeleton of the series was brought to life at the 2016 edition of New York Comic Con, into a stylish building presenting the park. A long hallway, handsome receptionist, official flyers and cards, video promo on loop and... a HTC Vive experience where the visitor was first introduced to the Westworld shop, to provide himself with guns, hat etc. and then entered a videogame experience. As one of the guests, she/he had to interact with the sheriff and some other cowboys, but when



Img. 2.6 Westworld (2016). Logo Series, official website (map and storylines) and virtual experience of the transmedia project (simultaneous, non-linear and parallel narratives).

he died, he sat in the office and started a live action experience which brought him to the Delos Lab presented in the series. Finally, they gave him official ADV materials and a contained farewell. Just one month more, and the second season of *Westworld* would be announced, thanks to the immediate success of its multilinear dramatic skeleton and the tested high

engagement of its transmedia skeleton, either online than in the real world.



Img. 2.7 Westworld app. Designed by fans for fans, and released just one month after the beginning of the series.

MULTILAYERED NARRATIVES

What clearly emerges out of all the examples presented so far is one of the dramaturgical features typical of transmedia: its natural inclination towards narratives presenting with different internal points of view and more fruition levels for the story. Transmedia audience loves the fruition of more stories at the same time, an element which allows them to autonomously choose both the POV (*point of view*) in the story and the form in which they can 'consume' the different plots and subplots offered by the media assets of the communicative system. It is not enough for those levels to be present in the narrative, they in fact need to be cross-cultural, compelling and engaging. As Simon Staffans reports: "Narrative 'layers' cut across channels and forms of media so that we can reach more people at scale. A layered narrative allows space for interaction, sharing, collaboration and contribution. Every unique layer makes the source material stronger and the core story more engaging".¹⁰

Multilayered narratives represent transmedia's favourite habitat, particularly with projects deriving from pre-existing and orderly imaginative universes and which need to be furtherly developed through the simultaneous use of different platforms and experiences.

In the light of such perspective we can list at least three different narrative planes in a transmedia project: the narrative's *main plot* (dedicated to the story world), a *primary subplot* (dedicated to the protagonist's relationships with the other characters) and a *secondary plot* (dedicated to the protagonist's evolution during the course of the narrative); in addition we can find at least one either *inner* or *outer point of view* with whom the building up of the imaginative universe is entrusted. These models may add up to further narrative levels, even those which were not part of the original author's plans or were created directly by the audience to fill the so called *narrative gaps*¹¹ typical of transmedia universes. Here too I shall present with a personal example.

Hunger Games is a novel by Suzanne Collins which has generated, starting from 2012, a movie quadrilogy. Its imaginative universe is that of the post-apocalyptic future of Panem, a State in the U.S. territory organized in 13 districts and ruled by a central big town: Capitol City. Every year a couple of promising youth from each of the 13 districts is forced to participate to the Hunger Games, a sort of 'olympic games to the finish' with the aim of offering a symbolic sacrifice victim to pacification, which happened seventy years before the story.

The universal synthetic structures of the imaginative universe are those of the reality show disguised behind the mask of a 'final battle'. The Hunger Games winner shall in fact be the one and only survivor to the games, at least until the protagonist of the story – the young Katniss – appears on to the scene.

10. Staffans, S., *One year in Now Media...* cit.

11. In transmedia storytelling, *narrative gaps* represent unanswered spaces seeded in the story arc of the tale in one or in multiple media. Fans love exploring these open spaces and play a role in the knowledge distribution process.

The imaginative isotopes of the narrative are the games' contest arena, the conflict between city and districts and the reference to the mythological episode of the sacrifice of seven young men and seven young women Minosse dictated to the people of Athens, part of the Minotaur myth. A 'rite of passage' where the protagonists recall different archetypal figures (the heroin: Katniss, the young 'Lara Croft' of the story; the old wise man; the shapeshifter, etc...)

The transmedia bouquet created for the development of the story in the first movie chapter of *Hunger Games* on different platform involved different narrative levels made of plots and subplots:

- the Panem website, where the public could register and become citizen of one of the districts (randomly chosen by the system);
- the profile in the main social networks, where the public could vote the mayor of each district, state the names of their 'tributes' and be a part of Panem's daily life;
- the *Hunger Games Adventure* social game on Facebook;
- the Capitol TV, addressed to the project's public, which had been transformed into citizens of Panem;
- President Snow's emails motivating and 'sedating' the public in the wait of the next Hunger Games.

Unlike the book and the film, as it can be easily understood by looking at the above list, the inner point of view of the project's communication system was not univocal, as it focused on the story of the protagonist; it was on the contrary a collective one, fragmented in different dimensions and possible realities for the people of Panem. A dangerous choice, which must be seen under the light of the whole saga and not just the single episode. The audience's response confirm the appreciation such choice: free to express and tell on Facebook through the different viewpoints,



Img. 2.8 Hunger Games' poster and the "Capitol Couture" website, a fashion magazine where the audience could shop, gossip and discover the new designers of the next 'games'.

the users logged-in as inhabitants of the different districts soon started to know each other, form secret alliances and organize in order to rebel, even anticipating strategies and tactics which were to appear in the following episodes.

The presence of the three different level of fruition (primary plot: rules and setting of the Hunger Games; primary subplot: the web material for the citizens of Capital City; secondary subplot: the life as a citizen of one of the districts, on Facebook) was thought more to make the public familiarize with the imaginative universe, rather than with the protagonist of the story. As a result, those fans who thought those narratives were not sufficiently focused on the protagonists of the 'games' started migrating on other editorial platforms with the aim of autonomously rewriting and reinterpreting the original adventures of Katniss and their other beloved heroes, for instance in the form of fanfiction. In order to fill this gap and 'bring back home' all those energies and enhance the image of the heroine of the saga, two years later, on the occasion of the Italian

launch of the sequel *Hunger Games: Catching Fire* I created the transmedia project *Be Katniss*, in order to support and advertise Jennifer Lawrence's participation to the International Movie Festival of Rome in 2013, relying on a different mixture of multilayered narrative. Primary asset of the project was a book tour organized by different steps which, through an in-depth analysis of the relationship between literary saga and movie adaptation, would approach gradually the film release with a series of events spread over the city, devoted to the "mockingjay" Katniss Everdeen.



Img. 2.9 *Be Katniss* (2013). Official poster of the transmedia book tour and iconic moments of the first two movies on the myth of Katniss Everdeen.

The transmedia bouquet of the project focused on three big meetings dedicated to the main character of the story through books, movies and games, supported by activities in the real and in the digital worlds. Contest on social network, the launch of the book tour during one of the main events in Italy for comics fans and moviegoers: ROMICS (the "Italian comicon", with 220.000 attendees in four days), an online contest in partnership with Mondadori (the book's Italian publisher), three events with

professionals and artists devoted fans of Katniss (titled “Be Katniss”, “The myth of the Mockingjay” and “Women stand up in Panem”) and the premiere of the movie in the festival, organized by Universal Pictures International Italy with the participation of the leading actress and other members of the cast. The “Be Katniss” project reminds us another crucial factor when it comes of multilayered narratives: the necessity of visually fasten the different levels of the story world to iconic moments shared and easily recognizable by the public, elements which allow the audience to leap from a medium on, to the other confidently and comfortably, in order to be fed with all the plots and subplots of the project’s communicative system with almost no solution of continuity.

DESIGN THE THEME OF THE TALE

No author can afford underestimating the importance of the *theme* in a narrative, theless with transmedia. The theme is the deepest meaning and the implicit message of a narrative. It is the reason why an author sits down and starts telling a story; their very narrative fuel. The theme should always be synthetized into one or two words: redemption, generational clash, violence pays, love wins, identity... The theme is a narrative’s Cocoon, something which can make a story last forever. In the case of transmedia, three essential coordinates establish that:

- the theme of a tale must be kept alive in the public throughout the whole ‘journey’ the audience makes on the different media (that is, it must create aspirational stories the public involved into the transmedia project would want to live on their own pulses);
- the theme of a story must inhabit the protagonist and contaminate – through the experience the protagonist lives in the narrative universe – all the media involved in the project (such action is called *embodying the theme of the hero*);
- the theme must never be directly made explicit in the

story world. On the contrary, it must be found in the synthetic universal structures of its imagery, or hidden in the most emotional spots of the dramatic skeleton. In this way it shall be more effective in journeying through the narrative's communicative system without favouring one medium over another, or one audience over another.

ASPIRATIONAL STORIES

Aspirational stories represent a crucial element of transmedia storytelling as they embody its very capacity of directly influence the public's ambitions and expectations: they seed the message a narrative contains. Aspirations stories are adventures anyone who finds pleasure in watching their heroes living them, secretly longs for living in some way too. They are set in universes we shall never part of and are lived with such an intensity we shall never be able to have. Then, as Jeff Gomez, transmedia producer e CEO di Starlight Runner Entertainment has it: *inner stories* which can amplify the "power of intimacy" of the audiences¹². An example?

In 2009, for season two of *True Blood*, a TV series created by Alan Ball that follows the adventures of vampires who are well-integrated into American society thanks to the invention of a synthetic type of blood that makes them apparently innocuous, HBO worked to expand the show's audience by launching a transmedia "integrated event level marketing campaign". This started as an online alternate reality game which centred around the website Bloodcopy.com, and spread out across social networks (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and MySpace) and through an online forum on the HBO website (with an exclusive interview with Samson the Vampire). In the same days, some people received plastic syringes with synthetic blood. Then, a True Blood Carbonated Drink was commercialized during the release of the series. Moreover, an American Vampire League

12. Giovagnoli, M., *Transmedia Storytelling*, 2011, p. 135.

was created to support vampire rights, while debates about whether or not American people wanted vampires living in their neighborhood were held in fictional newspapers and on TV. An effective transmedia project which mixed the imaginative universe of the series along with a generous display of sharp vampire canine teeth and blood and without ever mentioning the theme of the series: social integration and fear of diversity, and confronting the dark side inside us.

In a way we might consider the aspirational stories as those stories we would never want to live and therefore, we are – for different reasons – pleased by the possibility of watching them staged on more screens: it might be because of voyeurism or the need of exorcising reality, or simple curiosity or cynicism. In transmedia, dramatizing a complex theme or one socially relevant is the perfect objective as it is possible to create – without even mentioning it – communicative systems which can easily arouse conversations on more platforms and therefore have a great impact on the public. A personal example, here too?

The movie *Aquadro*, produced by Tea Time Film and distributed by Rai Cinema in 2013 was the first European movie to mention the transmedia producer in its final credits (my name, really). The plot of the story was as simple as striking: two youths have sex in a school lab and they make a video of it. But the video ends up online without their consent. They are thrown into a living hell and decide to flee when... Hang on: what does *Aquadro* means anyway? The symbol is a tattoo the girl has on her breasts and which plays with the initial of her name and of that of her boyfriend's. A sort of a 'scarlet letter'. The sign by which she is recognized by everybody on the Net. And yet, at the same time, it rises to be a sign of freedom, of protest, a sign which we choose to use for the movie's transmedia campaign with the aim of gaining the public's empathy and arouse curiosity about its distribution in a large and larger audience (which, as it was for the video in question, was first online and then on TV).



Img. 2.11 Aquadro (2013). Introducing the theme without mentioning it in the transmedia launch of the movie.

schools and universities, social media activities (on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) and a unique, private premiere of the movie for a selected group of fans. The campaign was a success with the public and the movie has won several prizes for independent productions in Italy and France.

THE TWO GOALS STRUCTURE

There are times when the theme of a narrative is innate with its protagonist to the extent that it gets confused with its objective, or even with a 'double objective'. In the *two goals structure*, the protagonist begins with being focused on something and then, as the narration spans, he or she discovers he or she has to reach for something else more valuable or simply more risky¹³. The theme is at the same time the trial and its passing, and

13. For a definition of the "two goals" structure see Siegel, D., *La struttura in nove atti*, in *Script*, 30/31, 2002.

different media have to take care to hold this in trust, in order to enhance the value of each of the goals across the steps of the narrative both from the point of view of the characters and of the multiple audiences of the story. An example, even if no “purely” transmedial?

In James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009), the protagonist, Jack Sully, is a paraplegic Marine who fights for himself (he betrays the Pandorians in order to regain the use of his legs) and at the same time for a better world (he merges into being one of the Na'vi). In this case we have two themes, actually: the individual redemption and the universal supremacy of nature over man; one opposing the other. In the movie's marketing campaign Cameron himself admitted that such an ambiguous protagonist might have been a little disorienting for the public. “It's a very difficult proposal in our modern marketing world”, commented the director, who also admitted that the movie, “put pressure on us to create the equivalent value of an existing brand without being an existing brand”. This is also the reason why the initial choice of the *Avatar* campaign was to launch a 15-minute free preview of the movie dedicated exclusively to the discovery of the hero of the story, when the public's attention was focused on his portrait as a person (what we called *embodying the theme of the hero*) rather than on the double objective of the story. The same strategy was applied in the augmented reality of the commercial products of *Avatar* associated to brands like McDonald's (where a thrill card allowed the users to ‘become Jake’ and explore the world of Pandora on their computer, just by putting the card in front of a webcam)¹⁴ and Coke (for which you needed a Zero Coke can in front of a videocamera to download the movie's exclusive content). Jake Sully as a human being and as an avatar harmonized with the universe, a “Pinocchio 3.0 re-imagined for the electronic age”, as Derrick De Kerkhove did put it. An absolutely gripping theme for the movie public but which was not involved into the transmedia project of the videogame

14. Rose, F., *The Art of Immersion...* cit., p. 53.

inspired to the movie, issued before *Avatar* premiered and solely focused on the primary theme of the character, the warfare and the individual factors, which probably found its reason in the need of preserving the narrative space to the franchise's main asset: the movie itself.



Img. 2.12 *Avatar* (2009). The double objective/theme of the story developed through the different media. It appeared in the film poster (Jake/Avatar/Nature) but not in the videogame and in the AR toys.

THE HERO'S JOURNEY VS THE "TWELVE STATIONS" PARADIGM

Transmedia loves combining narrative paradigms in its communicative systems, and *The Hero's Journey* and the *Twelve Stations* models are the two most important paradigms ever, mostly used for the main assets of the projects.

The Hero's Journey paradigm is rooted in the studies about the creation of myths in folktales and oral tradition, from Vladimir J. Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* to the theorization of the archetype of the Jungian Hero, from Joseph Campbell's studies and his *Hero with a Thousand Faces* to the TV screenplay guide by Chris Vogler¹⁵. Referring to the Structuralist lesson applied to folklore and epic tales, The Hero's Journey lets the structure of the plot and the story of the tale depend on the mythological experience of its protagonist. From the point of view of transmedia narratives and projects, The Hero's journey paradigm is the most effective for supportive communicative systems (see further on in the third chapter of this book) but it often offers a low level of interaction with the audience that likes to identify, in particular, with the hero on the big screen or *play the hero*. At the same time, thanks to The Hero's Journey paradigm, the presence of numerous archetypes (heroes, shadows, herald, threshold guardians, shapeshifters, tricksters or allies) allows the audience to side temporarily with all the characters throughout the tale. This helps the sharing of the imaginative universe of the story and, at the same time, works very well in the "marketing of the tale" of the transmedia culture. Considering the analysis of this paradigm, the twelve steps of The Hero's Journey are:

1. *The Ordinary World*: the hero is introduced to the audience living in his world at the beginning of the tale. In transmedia tales, to be more effective, this point of entry has to be immediately shown in a clear way in all

15. To refer to the creation of the "Hero's Journey" narrative paradigm: Vogler, C., *The Writer's Journey* (2007) and Campbell, J., *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) and Jung, C. G., *Gli archetipi dell'inconscio collettivo* (1968).

the platforms which start developing the story and its theme.

2. *The Call to Adventure*: suddenly, something shakes up the hero's life. Or, the hero starts off in a situation of normality from which some information is received that acts as a call to head off into the unknown. In the transmedia tale, this "interruption" of the story's flow is a topical moment, which has to be used in the main medium of the project, but then repeated in the other media in order to reinforce the uniqueness of the hero's experience.
3. *Refusal of the Call*: the hero tries to turn away from the adventure, but can't do it. In front of a "call", some of the characters act on impulse¹⁶, accepting the challenge; others, instead, totter and are reluctant. In transmedia tales, if spaces of real-time interaction with the audience of one or more media exist, in the moment of the hero's refusal, it is always better to let the audience act, in order to allow them to empathize more directly with their new favorite character.
4. *Meeting with the Mentor*: the hero meets someone who trains him or her, gives them advice and suggestions that will help in the journey and in life. The mentor is the Jungian archetype and the embodiment of the 'guide'. In transmedia projects, moreover, the mentor addresses both the hero and the audience simultaneously, and their voice challenges or helps the user to correctly interpret the experience of the tale.
5. *Crossing the Threshold*: at the end of Act One, the hero leaves the Ordinary World and enters the special, unknown world of his journey. In transmedia tales, the first threshold is often presented in each medium of the publishing project and it is the first, real and basic

16. Vladimir J., Propp defines this kind of heroes as *seekers* in: Propp, V. J., *Morphology of the Folktale*, 1968.

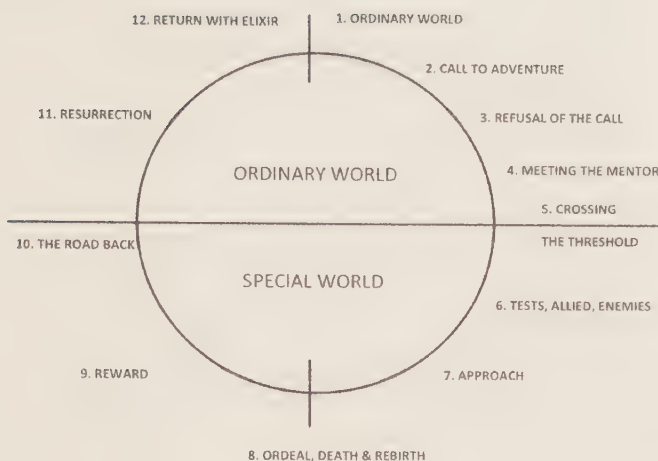
moment to make the audiences of multiple media collaborate among them.

6. *Tests, Allies and Enemies*: once the threshold is crossed, the hero and his audiences (with their allies and against their enemies) start their experiences and face challenges from one medium to another. To let himself be involved and immersed, the user must earn a good score, reaching visibility or power exactly when, in the tale, a choice or action is made or started. And this is valid for a single user as well as for a community or a group, split by the choice of allies and enemies in their jumping from one medium to the others of the communicative system.
7. *Approach to the in-Most Cave*: the hero and his allies prepare for the major challenge in the Special World. In order to positively reflect the emotions the protagonist has had, it is necessary that each of the involved media interpret the emotional tension of the character in its own way.
8. *The Ordeal*: the hero enters a central space in the Special World and faces his greatest fear. In transmedia tales, this is the most important moment for the live use of the tale; when it ends, the audiences or communities, in particular those in new media, will begin to ask themselves the same question: 'Will he succeed?' and will start cheating and exploring the communicative system to find the proper answer to all their questions.
9. *The Reward*: the Hero gains something special by facing death... and the multiple audiences of the transmedia project win with him!
10. *The Road Back*: the hero leaves the Special World and its adventure, and brings the treasure home. This new equilibrium might match that of the beginning but it must not be identical to it. In transmedia narratives this is when the audience is reminded of the best and most emotional moments of the story; it is mostly the time when the general meaning of the story expands to reveal

its theme to the public, which is for yet one more time called forth to experience the narrative both in the real world and in the digital world involved into the communicative system.

11. *The Resurrection*: the last sacrifice, the last climax, the last death and rebirth of the hero, to bring about a change in the inhabitants of his own Ordinary World and in the audience. This is in fact the moment when non linear narratives, characters' backstories and possible in-depths about the overall meaning of the tale are used in the communicative systems of reference with the aim of pulling the strings and solve the mysteries within the story, those same enigmas which had been shared with the public in the most interactive way possible.
12. *Return with the Elixir*: the hero returns home or continues the journey, bearing some element of the treasure that has the power to transform the world just like the hero was transformed. But first, something (the elixir) made him and his story immortal. What? In transmedia tales, this is the moment to spur into action, for the last time, all the audiences of the project; it might be through a final contest, which would be able to have them converge on a single, final arena of the tale, as often happens in the charity or fund-raising projects.

The *Twelve Stations Paradigm* is quite similar to that of The Hero's Journey, but it is more focused on the character's inner psychology and motivations, dividing the narrative universe into two main spheres of influence opposed to one another: good and bad, right and wrong, protagonist and antagonist, all with their own points of view. It is exactly for this reason that such a model can be applied to mostly *competitive transmedia systems* (see chapter three), where the single media have the possibility of choosing what side to be on and divide audience between them, often promoting in their own mechanisms participative narrative forms.



Img. 2.13 The Hero's Journey Paradigm Scheme.

The "Twelve Stations" is the outcome of the integration between the model of The Hero's Journey and that of Syd Field and Linda Seger¹⁷. It proves very effective in transmedia narrative, especially in that distributed on the web – where there is much more opportunity for audience interaction – and in advertising (including in its gaming dimension), where there is a stronger contrast between the characters' motivations and those of the brand and the audience. The twelve stations of the paradigm's structure are:

1. *The Inner Ghost*: an event from the past still haunts the protagonist of the tale. The ghost represents the actual motivation of the character and leads the narrator into using a particular register (strict? Ironical? Subtle?) In transmedia narrative, it is often presented in the beginning of the tale but revealed and maximized at the

17. Forlai, L., Bruni, A., *Come raccontare una grande storia che emozioni il pubblico*, 1996.

end of it (usually, in two media of the communicative system, at least).

2. *The Unconscious Wound*: a weak point or shadowy area the protagonist is not aware of, inside him or herself, and must now inevitably deal with. In transmedia narratives this issue is generally not explicitly revealed, with its presence left to the audience's deduction, or it can be evoked in a more advanced stage of the narrative, as a part of the live imagery of the story.
3. *Inciting Incident*: also called the *catalyst*. The part of the story in which the protagonist encounters the problem that will profoundly change his life. The different media involved in the narrative have the ability to show it from different viewpoints, leading the audience to choose which side to be on.
4. *Objective*: according to his or her objective, the protagonist of a given narrative attempts (comically, adventurously or dramatically) to overcome his or her ghost and, without knowing it, heal his or her unconscious wound. It is quite common that, in transmedia narratives, the protagonist's objective is combined with those specific to the audience such as victory points, rewarding powers or visibility within the narrative communities of the tale.
5. *Antagonist*: a character pursuing the same aim as the hero's, only with different motivations, though coherent and reliable. The antagonist is the bearer of completely different ideals than those of the hero; in a transmedia narrative the extent and nature of space given to the antagonist within a given media must always be clear from the initial planning phase, more so in competitive communication systems.
6. *The War*: rather than the actual conflict between hero and antagonist, this is the preparation for the final confrontation between their own worlds, their own ways of interpreting life and death, their own personal universes. In transmedia narratives this is the moment

of leaving the “microphones open” and let the audiences confront each other, without fear of flammers or excessively trying to manipulate the debate.

7. *Facing Death*: the final duel with the antagonist is preceded by an intimate confrontation between the hero and his or herself. The hero pays Death a visit to which he or she will act in a way that will lead him or her to redemption, or to an irretrievable defeat. In transmedia narrative this is the only instance when the narrative must go back into the hands of its original author.
8. *Final Battle*: only one of the contestants shall eventually reach the shared goal. In this perspective, in transmedia tales each medium involved must have the possibility of expressing its own viewpoint, according to its own language. This is, moreover, the space which is most devoted to the entertainment dimension, as well as that which provides a reward for the public, for example thanks to events or contests.
9. *Awakening*: at the end of the battle a new viewpoint tells another hero's story. It consists of a new awareness, at times a real understanding, as in ancient classical drama. On other occasions there is simply an escape to a new world or a newer immersion into the protagonist's ordinary environment. In this case, each medium is free to tell such a passage in its own way.
10. *Transformation of the double*: during the course of the final battle, the Antagonist goes through a path of mutation and awakening, similar to that undergone by the Protagonist. Of course, as a consequence, the story changes again.
11. *New balance*: defeater or defeated, together with their followers, returns to the initial world of the story, even though it is not what it used to be. An important change occurred in their existence and so it will have to be with the audience. In transmedia narratives this is the second and last celebrative occasion where contests or events,

both physical and online, can be organized in order to completely integrate the project's audiences and communities. Obviously they do so by recalling the most touching passages of the story.

12. *Thematic revelation*: subtly, the basic message of the story becomes universal to the public's eyes, remembering that, as already pointed out in the previous chapter, the theme of the narrative (the protagonist's unconscious wound) is more effective if invisible during the whole course of the tale.

Then, since Hero's Journey and Twelve Stations express different focus points (on the protagonist and the adventure the first, on the plot and the psychological mechanics, the second) but have some point in common, personally I use combinations of the two, highlighting some points and selecting them depending on the project and its universe mythology and story worlds. The same is often done, even unconsciously, by participative or synergistic groups of fan and audience creators. An example?

There's a mysterious Ministry in Madrid, born to avoid intruders coming from other eras to change history for their own benefit. The Ministry of Time uses its patrols to protect the magic doors which permit the time travel. But its newest patrol, formed by a soldier, a student woman and a paramedic, start time travelling by their own for personal interests and not just for work...

El ministerio del tiempo (2015) is a Spanish fantasy television series written by Javier and Pablo Olivares, produced by Onza Partners and Cliffhanger for the spanish broadcaster RTVE. Authors and producers both created a complex transmedia bouquet for the series since its first season but developed it in a polymorphic narrative lifelong process in its second season, thanks to the amazing contribution of the fans. The transmedia dramatic skeleton of the first season consisted in:

- a training video course for ministry employee, presented by historical characters and protagonists,

distributed online. The fans immediately start interacting with it and creating their own videos mentioning their favourite historical hero or artist, for example [the ordinary world / the call to adventure];

- *Puerta del Tiempo*: a weekly live TV show, with interviews to the cast and vip guests answering audience's questions in studio [tests, allied, enemies / the antagonist];
- An hyperactive WhatsApp Group led by the authors, with trials and extra contents for participants (called 'ministéricos') [meeting with the mentor / objective];
- An occult archive on Instagram, with limited access to historical images coming from the missions of ancient patrols, not viewed in the series [the inner ghost / the refusal of the call];
- One Generador de Certificados for 'ministéricos' [crossing the threshold].

The dramatic skeleton of the second season too, mixed different paradigms and pushed forward audience's engagement. Each content created ought to contribute and enrich the plot, the characters and the imaginative universe of the new episodes but, at the same time, should give the audience new ways to interact and deepen into the imaginative universe of the tale. The transmedia bouquet was enriched with:

- *Tiempo de valientes*, a six chapter audio-journal of Julián, one of the main characters who describes travels not seen in the series [unconscious wound / the call to adventure];
- *Tiempo de Confesiones*, the vlog of one of the Ministry secretary, explaining the secret meaning of some scenes and actions shown in the series [the inner ghost / crossing the threshold];
- *El tiempo en tus manos*, a ten minutes virtual reality

experience for cardboards and Samsung Gear, both entertaining and educational, playing with the imaginative universe and the historical references of the series, and with a recruiting test for patrols applicants [crossing the threshold / tests, allies, enemies / the ordeal / the war];

- *La tienda*, the official gift shop of the series, with artworks created by fans;
- *El tiempo es que el es*, the first official novel of the series, based on the thrilling story of Elias Sotoca, one employee of the ministry entrapped in the 780 a.C. and discovered by a secret manuscript [resurrection / the road back];
- A Role game and a fictional Intranet available online on the Ministerio's website [crossing the threshold / tests, allies, enemies];
- Comic books and fanfiction tales produced by fan for fan [thematic revelation / return with the elixir].

To carry out projects and works simultaneously distributed on multiple media, then, storytellers and transmedia producers mix and create their own paradigm over time, to define “dramaturgic outlines” that are useful for each of their project. Given the example of a narrative adapting itself to the tale and to solid and accurate narrative models and following the logic sequence of the events and its telling in the different media involved in a communicative system, what happens in transmedia when a project changes its narrative skeleton while in progress, with the aim of making the fruition of its contents more appealing, complex or free from logical rules? We are given two possible solutions in this case: *branching stories* or *polymorphic narratives*.

BRANCHING STORY STRUCTURES

Branching story structure come from game design and is an important way of crafting and imagining plots, goals, clues and



Img. 2.14 Ministerio del Tiempo (2016). Transmedia project, platforms and polymorphic narrative contents for the second season of the series: ministry's intranet, novel, comic book, VR experience and gift shop for fan.

media interactions in transmedia story worlds. The premise of the branched structures is that in videogames and in interactive installations there are two simultaneously acting stories: the *story written* (or *planned*) and the *story played*. The videogames' grammar joins the three act structure with parallel and non-linear narratives mixing story, game play and player's decisions either *before* than *during* the tale. Transmedia projects and narrative designers often use narrative introductions or contributions (*cinematics* or *video tutorials*) and in-game plots (*scripted scenes*, *game play* and *exposition sequences*) as shapes,

models and paradigms not just for the interactive spaces of their dramatic skeletons.

The branching paradigm uses *story sequences*, *key plots events*, *decision moments* and *character interactions*, in fact, to create chains of *nodes* and *branches* which establish bridges/touch points/links among all the contents, the actors and the actions either in linear than in non-linear plots leading to one or more *finale*.

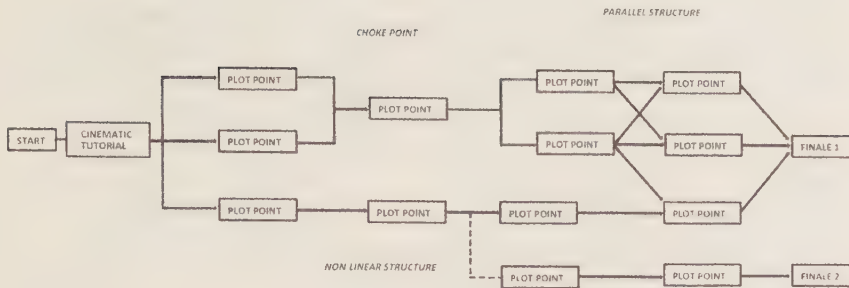
As Janet Murray wrote in her *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*, then, in branching narratives the story itself depends on the *sense of agency* of the player. If in static story worlds and in the aspirational stories the audience's sense of presence constantly look at characters' emotions, actions and motivations, in fact, in videogames "*agency is the satisfying power to make meaningful action and see the results of our decisions and choices*"¹⁸. And satisfaction means engagement, motivation, sharing will, participation and loyalty as well.

Branching structures of a narrative can be something complex and difficult put together but it can also contribute significantly to the multilevel and multilinear story worlds of the transmediasphere. Those elements in fact facilitate interaction and projecting between storytellers, designers, producers and developers. Their schemes are sometimes the proper field – or even battlefield – to tell, develop and manage transmedia properties and universes and properly underline their complexity and internal *armonia*.

POLYMORPHIC NARRATIVE

The polymorphic narrative simultaneously uses different media, adapts itself in progress to audience's choices and allows its authors/users to make a unique experience and totally yield to a flow of stories, adventures and fascinations. It creates a content flux which results strongly cooperative and emotional. In other

18. Murray, J., *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in cyberspace*, 1998.



Img. 2.15 Branching story structure. Example of chokepoints, non-linear and parallel stories.

words, it's literature and fiction getting closer to games, with narrative time synchronized to that of fruition creating digital othernesses where it would be possible to exalt Pierre Levy's four variables necessary to develop "collective intelligence"¹⁹: *nomadic mobility* (of players and characters played by them), *control over territory*, *ownership over commodities* (exchanged both in the virtual and in the real world), and *mastery over knowledge* (either shared or hidden, according to the objectives of the games). Also in this case we shall provide with two examples, one drawn from transmedia 'prehistory' and the other from the present.

In October 2007 the TV serial *CSI-NY* 'landed' on the metaworld of Second Life, with a very peculiar idea. In the television narrative, an episode of the series saw protagonist Mac Taylor (Gary Sinise) entering *Second Life* to flush out a murderer who was luring his victims by surfing the metaworld. Simultaneous to the airing of the episode the authors proposed to the audience three different forms of synergistic fruition:

- solve the case through the interaction with links on the CBS website, or visiting the CSI lab in one of the New

19. Lévy, P., *Collective Intelligence...* cit.

York skyscrapers reconstructed within the metaworld of Second Life;

- join the game *Murder by Zuiker*, following the traces left by the killer in change of virtual gadgets for the 100 contestants who would get closer to the solution of the case;
- become the detective, using the kit for investigations and wearing a uniform, with the possibility of questioning suspects so to be able to solve the same case which was being aired, built as to close with a cliff-hanger and leave the audience suspended... until the following February! A complex initiative, which added the recreational dimension typical of the treasure hunt or the book game to the television narrative, and at the same time was metaphorical unlocking the doors of the writing section of a great TV series to the narrative model of interactive fiction, to the transcoding of narratives and to the *additive comprehension*²⁰, typical of the new transmedia narratives.

For a short fraction of time, when author and user draw close as they do in polymorphic narrative, we do witness to a case of *omusia*, identity, as it is more commonly in the case of the *Alternate Reality Stories*. ARS as polymorphic narrative are the result of a contamination between alternate reality games and interactive storytelling and owe their terming to Jane McGonigal, who defines them as interactive stagings played online and in real places at the same time, in the space of days or weeks, by small groups as well as by thousands of participants engaged with a narrative product²¹. The only element which does remain the same is the form of internal learning provided by

20. The definition of the audience's additive comprehension in transmedia narratives is due to Neil Young, former Electronic Arts, as it reads in: Jenkins, H., *Convergence Culture*, 2007.

21. McGonigal, J., *Reality is broken. Why games make us better and how they can change the world*, 2011.



Img. 2.16 Left, CSI-NY (2007) Second life launch, with the pay off “You’ve Seen the Show, Now Be the Show!”. Right, screenshot with the picture of the victim of the virtual assassin in the detection *Murder by Zuiker* set up by the production.

the narrative. It can be considered as an *expert paradigm* (EP), crucial to the success of the narrative. It is exactly because of the presence of stirring, user-friendly expert paradigms that polymorphic narrative projects are gradually gaining even more spaces in transmedia storytelling, hybridizing and contaminating with comics, cartoons and movies all over the world.

Many of the networks, channels and publishers struggle with justify the expense of transmedia projects. They wrongly believe that they already have these audiences come into their shows, so why would they spend any more money to make these extra content? But, as I said, this is all about building a *deep body*. Another problem is the manpower that it takes to create this extra content. It can be extremely taxing for the creative team of a narrative to have to come up with all of this new material. The audience also gets very used to consuming this content quickly. The faster you make the content, the faster it can be consumed. One of the tricks is to allow the audience itself to start creating content for themselves. For me, this has become a key component of transmedia storytelling – welcoming you in the audience as co-authors, allowing them to have ownership of some of the narrative. — *Tim Kring – transmedia creator and showrunner* (Heroes, Crossing Jordan).

Polymorphic narratives work like rhetoric for advertising, like special effects for a movie; they are boosters some spaceships use to correct their trajectories in the narrative's endless space. They are concerned with building up narratives and also with the use of a communicative system. A crucial priority of polymorphic narratives is allowing authors and users to let themselves unrestrictedly go with the flow of stories, adventures and suggestions by interacting with them synergically.

One last feature of polymorphic narratives is, as we have noted, the fact that they base the narrative of the story world on the exchange and the continuous evolution of content and experiences, both in time and in the different media assets. It is a voluntary and fully aware evolution which – in the public eye – ups the ante, and which, in extreme cases, might lead to *mindfucking*, that is when one builds ambiguous or misleading frameworks of meaning in the narrative, so that they can easily be overturned in progress or at the end of a story. The audience fully participates into the narrative and is disoriented first, and compensated at the end of the tale, as nothing they have believed until the uncovering was actually reliable.²² For instance, in transmedia communicative systems, while a medium shall work as a mouthpiece for deception, another one shall support it and the third shall wait until the end before unveiling the truth and closing the narrative circle. Such a strategy is functional mainly to 'raise the temperature' of a story when the dramatic arc created for the project and the public's engagement are believed to be unsatisfactory. We are now providing with an example that has become more than a classic of transmedia history: the so-called transmedia *mystery box*.²³

22. *Mindfuck* narratives can – on a theoretical plan – be associated to R. Anton Wilson's 'Operation Mindfuck', which we find in his 1975 *Illuminatus!* trilogy. More recent examples can found in *Fight Club*, *The Sixth Sense*, *The Hours* and *The Game*.

23. In his TED conference in March, 2007, J. J. Abrams (*Super 8*, *Lost*, *Star Trek*, *Star Wars: the Force Awakens*...) defined the *mystery box* as one of his most effective storytelling tools. According to this theorization, sometimes the mystery is more important than the plot, in the story. The mystery box "represents infinite possibility, hope, potential.

Mixing the production model of Renaissance workshops with the one of a communication agency, *LOST* (2004-2010) creators Damon Lindelof e Carlton Cuse worked to make the writing process of the TV series simultaneously useful to the creation of all the other official brand products as well, enabling *permanently changeable imagery*²⁴. First example of a transmedia project for a TV series, *LOST* tells the adventures of a group of people who survived a plane crash and harshly struggle for survival on a mysterious and violent island. The tale used the transmedia dramatic skeleton in all the contents of the transmedia bouquet and *LOST* gradually became a mobisode (*Missing Pieces*, short-form videos about a manuscript found on the island, used to show the motivations and the backstory of the characters), novels (as the bestseller *Bad Twin*), and at the same time a series of console/pc video games (as *Lost: Via Domus*), a game app and a series of alternate reality games considered canon (*The Lost Experience*, *Find 815*, *Lost University* and more), with numerous usable and playable, editable spaces for the audience, all of them characterized by a strong osmosis between *immediacy* and *hypermediacy*²⁵. With an endless exchange between the immediacy of the tale and its permutations, and the obscurity and presence of alternate and hyper structured additions, which are not always found in the audiovisual series, but that exist in other kinds of media spaces managed by the authors (hypermediacy).

All the narratives connected to the series ranged from the multi-character choral narrative, the TV narrative, the graphic adventure, the first-person quest (in multi-player modality for videogames), using *plot-driven* or *character-driven* narrative

Mystery is the catalyst for imagination. And there are times where mystery is more important than knowledge”.

24. In narratives with *permanently changeable imagery*, Jaime d’Alessandro points out, the “system of rules [...] works as a scaffolding for any sort of imagination. Projections of one’s own personality in an immaterial space come alive thanks to a great collective narrative” in J. D’Alessandro, *Play 2.0*, 2005, p. 96.
25. For the definition of *immediacy* and *hypermediacy*, Ref. to: Bolter R., Grusin, R., *Remediation*, 2003.

skeletons, for each season. At the same time, taking a closer look, we can see how in all the transmedia assets of the franchise the two goals structure could also be found; this was obtained using the background of the characters and moving through the present time of the plane crash, the flashback of their lives before the airplane crash and obscure anticipations about their future on the island.

Finally, in the last season of the series, when all the narrative matter had reached its most complex point and, as Damon Lindelof has declared, he and the other creators of the show had run out of possibilities for further *flashbacks* and *flashforwards* in their narrative, for the first time in an audiovisual narrative they decided to import one of the transmedial strategies most typical of stories divided on more media at the same time: *flashsideways*. These are secondary detours about characters that happens concurrently to the narrative, so that the ground of possible variation becomes wider and the long awaited ending of the series gets less predictable²⁶.

TRANSMEDIA CHARACTERS

In any whatsoever narrative form characters are our eyes and ears. In transmedia they also come to be our voice and our guide within a project's communicative system. Moreover, in narratives using more platforms, characters and points of view often contaminate and interact, both with each other and as a carrier of conversation between authors and audience, community, users and consumers.

The power of transmedia storytelling to tell "inner stories" through different media today consists in "character-based storytelling". Creating a proxy for the individual to experience the story on an emotional basis. The clearer the point-of-view, the more accessible it is to the person to experiencing it. — *Daemon Lindelof – transmedia*

26. Neil Landau interviews Damon Lindelof in: Landau, N., *The TV Showrunner's Roadmap*, 2014.



Img. 2.17 LOST. Videogames recreating on mobiles (left) and console (right) the story's narrative imagery of the series working on visual immediacy in graphics choices, and on hypermediacy in narrative ones.

creator for TV (Lost) and cinema (Star Trek, Prometheus, Star Trek – Into darkness)

It is not within the scope of the present work the aim of giving an in-depth view of all the features of character creation and of character design. I shall therefore focus on the creative and technical elements crucial to conceive and develop characters in transmedia projects.

The majority of good stories take the characters through a journey. To me, I find both external and internal obstacles interesting. The multi-form nature of transmedia lends itself to providing different perspectives. This means we can venture much further into a character, and their relationships with others. In one medium we find the characters going through a narrative arc, but then we can also delve further and discover a previous narrative arc that makes their recent one even more significant. This is one of the beautiful aspects of transmedia: the cumulative effect of depth across time and space. And of course, given that transmedia requires an audience to actively join the dots across media and also play a role in the story world, the whole experience can facilitate a player journey too. As players spend time with characters, they potentially grow with them. — *Christy Dena – transmedia pioneer and Director of Universe Creation 101.*

Let us start from the different aspects of *character building* in a transmedia universe, and particularly from the choice of the point of view. In transmedia communicative systems, and in the different assets of a project, the point of view in a narrative is never unique (*univocal*); it can also be *inner* (if the narrating voice either is that of one of the characters, or it lives around them), or *outer* (if the narrating voice lives outside the world inhabited by the characters) at the same time. What really matters is that once a choice is made one must be faithful to it until the end of the narrative. The same goes with *focusing*, that is the position the narrating voice assumes with respect to those of all the characters taking part into the tale. In each medium involved into the project, focusing can be *inner* (if the narrator knows as much as the other characters do), *outer* (if the narrator knows less than the other characters do) or *zero* (if the narrator is all-knowing, and knows more than the characters do).

Representing an alternative, one to the other in traditional narratives, all points of view and focusing are essential carriers in the process of building up an interactive dialogue with transmedia multiple audiences. Some points of view may be entrusted directly with the public, or also doubled through the creation of new characters or settings where one can temporarily

[illegible]

Portraying characters brings us on to a completely different ground. In order to build effective transmedial personas it is necessary focus since the beginning on two crucial conditions of transmedia communication:

- even the most extraordinary, inhuman character ought to be a real being with a real life, to be shared at different levels by the audience in the different assets of the transmedia bouquet;
- good transmedia characters often keep secrets and

27. About the metaphor of the human mind seen as a 'story hive' for the users of transmedial narratives, see Rose, F., *The Art of Immersion...* cit., p. 8.

enigmas in their backstories or in the course of the tale, or must be in jeopardy for some reasons, to let them be somehow discovered by the audience.

The need of presenting with characters who can with no traumatic interruptions be moved from a platform to the other does not necessary implies the use of 'easy' or 'flat' characters. On the contrary, in order to work in the most effective way on more media at the same time, transmedia characters must have – more than traditional characters – some essential dramaturgical features:

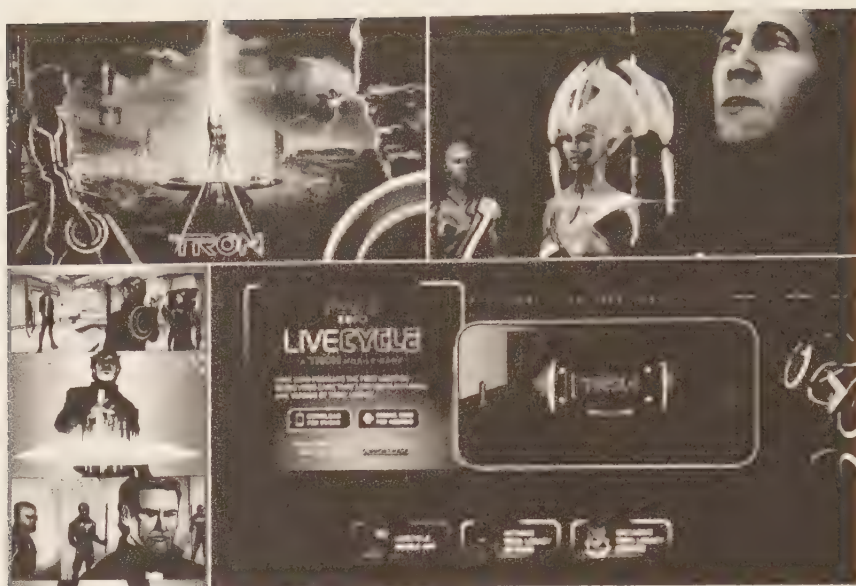
- an *inner ghost*, an event from the past still haunts the protagonist of the tale (on one or more platforms);
- an *unconscious wound*, an event from the past still haunts the protagonist of the tale. A weak point or shadowy area the protagonist is not aware of, inside him or herself, and must now inevitably deal with (on a always growing number of platforms)²⁸;
- a *mask*, which strictly connects the character to gender clichés and – at the same time – exploit their mythological and archetypal roots, greedily feeding off the both direct and indirect quotes drawn from other languages and media imagery;
- a *hierarchical role*, more evident than in other characters active in the narrative (so that it can be reduplicated or altered with full awareness in the different assets of the communicative system).

An interesting example comes from transmedia franchise *Tron: Legacy* and Sam Flynn (Garrett Hedlund), who, in the narrative is Kevin Flinn's (Jeff Bridges) son, an engineer who created the multinational ENCOM and the virtual reality system *Tron*, before disappearing for twenty years, that is when the new

28. We have already dealt with the concepts of inner ghost and unconscious wound in the Twelve Stations paradigm. But I hereby restate them here for the reader's comfort.

chapter of the story begins. For what concerns the portrait of the character, Sam is the typical figure of the rebel and irrepressible son who would do anything not to go down his father's path, even hacking his own company to diffuse software and application on the Net (interior ghost). It is only when he himself enters the virtual reality system that he will be able – with quite a lot of strain – to trust his father again (unconscious wound). His positive mask and his role shall therefore result enriched by the parental gap existing between father and son, by Sam's will of fighting his own interior ghost and from his will of giving a contribution to actively save the world which is threatened by the parallel universe the characters are trapped into (two-goal structure). All this presents with a complex psychological mechanism which needs time to be understood and that, for this very reason, was excluded from all the promotional content of the movie, which were more oriented towards the figure of the father and the controversial father-son relationship, as it can be seen in the videogame as well in the animated series, in the alternate reality game as well as in the co-marketing actions implemented with Coca-Cola Zero, Nokia and Marvel Comics for the screen launch (following modalities quite similar to those we have dealt with when analyzing Jake Sully's case in *Avatar*). On the other hand it must be observed how part of *Tron's* narrative universe was devoted to an in-depth narration of the events happened in the 20 years span separating the first film narrative from the second (missing moment). Works such as the videogame *Tron: Evolution* or the graphic novel *Tron: Betrayal* were published before the film was released is that they could make a significant contribution to a more immediate understanding of the super technological story world around which the narrative is framed.

It must also be observed how, in terms of character crafting processes, transmedia often gives priority to emotion rather than portraying, and to action rather than to emotion. Transmedia, conversely, usually does not state any priority on the dichotomy conflict-change, leaving the public free to interpret, to



Img. 2.19 *Tron: Legacy's* transmedial universe. In order to create a more efficient imaginative hook linking back to the first movie, the character of Kevin Flynn (Jeff Bridges) is more present in the cut scenes of the videogame *Tron: Evolution* (up) and in the comics *Tron: Betrayal* (down left) than the son – the actual protagonist – is. The same can be said about the marketing campaign “Life Circle” – which hints at the conflictual father-son relationship – created by Coca-Cola Zero in the form of a mobile game.

completely autonomously choose whether to experience the identity of the protagonist, of the antagonist, or that of the other characters within the different media of the communicative system. For these reasons – as we have debated in the first chapter of the present book – in transmedia storytelling the mythological roots and the archetypal references are usually more important than the character's motivations to act.

I believe that the best version of the best character for a transmedia projects is to have a tremendous amount of mythology and a deep cannon of story that surround the characters. The idea is to use the diverse attributes of each platform in their own unique way to

tell the story thanks to the characters. An idea, for example, is to have the characters appear to exist in the real world – giving them a social media presence that allows them to speak to fans. — *Tim Kring – transmedia creator and showrunner (Heroes, Crossing Jordan)*



Img. 2.20 Mythological Archetype for transmedia heroes and characters – Simulation.

In order to secure the public's loyalty, transmedia projects and story worlds finally offer the public at least two characters – or two groups of characters – who can 'harbor' each medium's audience. The most popular solution is generally that of creating and preferring characters who do not appear to be too 'original' and extravagant. Who can move but are not cumbersome for a public asked to consume many experiences connected with the narrative. Mentors, guests or avatar who can satisfy the audience from the beginning and who do not need particular filters in terms of imaginative suggestions in order to do that.

It is not only the element of tridimensionality, of complexity in drawing psychological profiles and in shaping inner hierarchies that can make transmedia characters ready to be used simultaneously and with no juxtapositions on different story lines and platforms. With all those features transmedia characters, to quote a famous line from the *Blade Runner* movie:

'burn twice as bright [and therefore] burn half as long', thus forcing their authors to resolve such an existential gap in four different ways:

- creating a double (doppelgänger) or organizing them in small groups of co-protagonists;
- leveling them on to their 'negative' correspondent on different media: for example protagonist vs antagonist (a mechanism which, on a closer look, is another form of doubling the identity);
- giving them a mutant nature, whether this be voluntary or induced, natural or the outcome of different kinds of alterations (as it is the case with supermen, fantastic or science fiction narratives);
- taking them from 'other worlds', esoteric or alternative if compared to ours, so that they can be enriched with suggestions and with the imaginative heritage of different narrative universes.

The passage from an asset to the other of a communicative system eventually requires voices, characters and inner points of view of the narrative to be always and straight away crystal clear for the audience; they must be easy to perceive and regular in the presence on the different platforms of the editorial project. As Christopher Markus and Steve McFeely, screenwriters of *Captain America: Civil War* and other Marvel Cinematic Universe movies has it, for example: "The way to maintain the tone of each separate movie is just to be honest and genuine with your characters. [...] The different characters really do dictate their tone. We mean, Tony [Robert Downey Jr.] is so irreverent and so stream-of-consciousness that it would seem a disservice to put some giant, heavy, political conspiracy plot in an Iron Man movie. It would feel like you don't get what's fun about this"²⁹. In this respect it is useful to add a thought on the identity of

29. Berkovitz, J., *Captain America Writers talk...*cit.

characters from very complex imaginative universes, which are characterized by more story worlds running at the same time. In this case in fact there can be characters who slightly modify their features following the story world they act in. For instance, the character of Iron Man in the Marvel Universe can be found with different shades in the three *Iron Man* movies, or in *The Avengers*, while he can assume again different hues in *The Invincible Iron Man* comic book series and in *The Avengers: Earth Mightiest Heroes* animated series. “He’s really close, but there are subtle differences. His personality is very similar across all the versions, but the relationship he has with other characters varies. His backstory, what the Iron Man armor itself can do and cannot do varies as well”³⁰. But it still remains one of the most seductive transmedia icons in the Marvel imagery!

As it was already observed concerning the presence of more points of view and subplots in a tale, also in the choice of the characters the new transmedia narratives rely predominantly on stories with more protagonists, choral narratives and dramaturgies, in movies as well as in TV series, in videogames, literature, comics advertising, interactive arts and communication in general. This happens mainly for editorial reasons (you involve more target at once), economic reasons (you compress the financial weight of the different media in your budget), legal reasons (you optimize the value of the project’s intellectual properties) and productive reasons (you simplify the processes related to the different industries concurrently working on the same project).

One last distinctive feature of transmedia narrative with regard to the building of characters is in fact – as already anticipated – the possibility – in the course of the narrative – to deconstruct the existing hierarchies between the characters acting within a story world (protagonists, mentors, helpers, objects of desire, antagonists and background characters). The different assets of a communicative system can give priority to different

30. Dowd, T., Fry, M., Niederman, M., Steiff, J., *Storytelling Across Worlds...* cit., p. 42.



Img. 2.21 Examples of characters belonging to different transmedia story worlds: mutant superheroes drawn from other literary worlds (Maximum Ride), in comics (Marvel and DC Comics heroes), in TV series (Glee) and in movies (The Hobbit Saga).

mouthpieces, rule out others or bring on some others new, always bearing in mind how the characters of a franchise or of a portmanteau are not only catalyzers for the public's consumption, but also gates crucial to access the interactive sharing of the content of a narrative. In this view the protagonists of stories simultaneously developed on different media must first of all be functional to the narrative and to its active consumption by the audience, much more than it is in traditional storytelling.

WORKSHOP 2 – STORY DESIGN

Take the concept, the imaginative universe and the nebula you have developed in the exercise at the end of chapter one. Start from the story crafting process. Create the dramatic skeleton. Define plot, primary and secondary subplots you shall place in

the different media of the communicative system. Organize the story using sequential, parallel, simultaneous, two-way and non-linear narratives. Eventually define the theme of the tale and use the narrative paradigm you reckon to be the more convenient to be sent to the audience of each medium. Create coherent, effective and tridimensional characters who might potentially become 'active depositaries' of the audience love and performative engines for its active interaction. Finally gather all the material in an orderly way; it shall be useful for the work we are looking ahead to.

CHAPTER 3

TRANSMEDIA COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

The creation of a transmedia project must always make the audience access to the multi media content easier, and rouse a willingness of participation and sharing from the audience. To enable the participation of the audience and the sharing of a tale's imagery distributed on multiple media, it is necessary to guide the different audiences of each medium involved in the project towards an independent use of the story, expressing:

- frequent clarification of small parts of the plot in the different media involved;
- clear explanation of the relationships among the different media, suggesting descriptive areas and expressions that can be shared by the audience;
- presence of repeated hooks, bridges and links between the media involved in the project.

Moreover, the public needs to be able to navigate the communicative system in a non-traumatic mode, a way that is almost accidental and the most self-sufficient possible. Once 'inside' it will be up to the public itself to decide whether to take up or not the *calls to action* the different assets of the project

involve. Therefore, the ‘intervention principle’ of a transmedia project’s audience develops into three stages:

- motivation to act (*primer*);
- sense of the action (*referral*);
- personal reward for the action done by the audience (*reward*).

Primer, referral and reward represent the ‘basic grammar’ of any whatsoever transmedia ecosystem. The objective of a *primer* is to give the audience a strong reason to join into the narrative. The *referral* is – on the other hand – a call aimed at giving the basic information on how and when take action. By adding up all these information, we shall dispose them into logical patterns, or scripts, structured into neural hubs creating a close knit net made of deductions and anticipations leading the audience into the reconstruction and the interpretation of the narrative. Eventually, the *reward* presents with two objectives: giving the public a straightforward answer on behalf of the system (showing them their answer was taken into consideration and appreciated) and rewarding them in a tangible way (money, visibility, consumption). A transmedia designer has the task of creating narrative environments and communicative systems which, in terms of art, creativity and technology, could satisfy at best such needs and expectations, moulding forms, patterns and techniques with some international solidity.

Transmedia drives authors to think episodically. There is no great conclusion at the end of a medium, it is more of a corner. It asks authors to view all artforms as equal. One isn’t a primary medium and another tertiary to be used purely for distribution or promotion. Authors gather all that they love into their arms and figure out how to make them work together. They need to be skilled at many trades, and a master at combining them. — *Christy Dena – transmedia pioneer and Director of Universe Creation 101.*

Designing and moulding the ‘form’ of the communicative system of a franchise or a portmanteau is a crucial action in the creative

and productive process of a narrative spread on different media. The transmedia designer creates style and imagery, layout and brand identity but, at the same time, the project's architecture and the essential dynamics of its communication too. The final objective of its work is represented by the production of a series of documents to be transferred to the different creative and technological departments that work on all of the project's assets. Among those documents there are some which present with an editorial nature (*transmedia bible*, *franchise universe mythology document*, *project reference document*), while others are more practical (*transmedia roll out*), or more sectorial, targeted to the different technical and creative departments working on each medium (layouts, wireframes, charts, templates, palettes, sketches, sound themes, audio & video references, and so on...) At this stage of our journey, we shall go deeper into the building and the development of a transmedia project's communicative system. Since the appendix of the present work shall specifically deal with the production of editorial and executive documents, I shall in this chapter deal with an in-depth analysis of the specific models and the concerned techniques of shaping the *mechanics* and the *aesthetics* of transmedia projects.

POINT AND LINE TO PLANE

Considering the complexity of communicative processes – both simultaneous and asynchronous – transmedia producers presently use, the most useful schemes of representation stem from different theories concerning the “shape of the universe”. These come from natural physics, quantum mechanics and astronomical theories, and in the case of a transmedia project they refer to two fundamental systems:

- one *flat* and Euclidean, where the forces (the different media of a project) and the bodies that are subjected to them (the contents of the project) move on a single infinite plane, depending on measurable and classifiable sprints (after the official closing of the project as well as during the “active” time of its spectacularization);

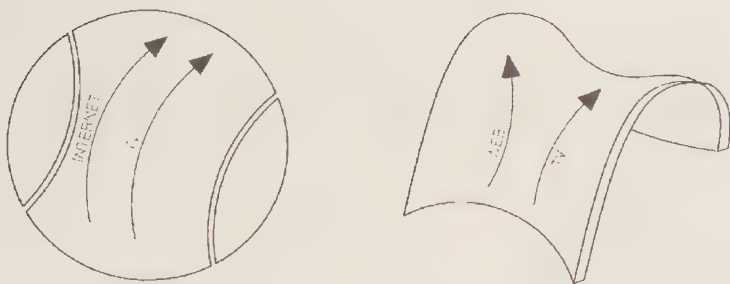
- one *curved*, where the forces (different media of a project) and the bodies that are subjected to them (contents of the project) move around and take on different forms, which are not always predictable, as in neural or particle tissues.

It is clear that, based on the definition, the curved ones are often more complex. The publishing contents and interactions between the different technological platforms depend on the shape of the curve shared among the authors and the audience of a project¹, and according to the ratio of the *curvature*, the use of time and length of the tale, a transmedia project can take two additional “shapes”:

- a *sphere* (with a positive curvature), which is a system based on perfectly balanced communication between the various media, with content that is cyclically and repeatedly distributed, with frequent shuffling and interventions of products that live a “second life” in the multiple media involved in the project;
- a *saddle* (with a negative curvature), that is a multimedia system in which the mass of bodies (media contents) tends to spread out and enlarge, but at the same time, tends to disperse. As in the case of reports distributed on multiple media, they can change and repeat until their tales become fragmented and poor.

An example? 2013 was the year of the first example of a transmedia *twin narrative*²: the portmanteau *Defiance*, TV series and online video game were created and aired by tv broadcaster

1. The concept of *curvature* was first applied to transmedia storytelling in 2005, in Giovagnoli, M., *Fare cross-media*, 2005. The calculation of this curve comes in part from Albert Einstein's theory of general relativity where, in his opinion, the mass of bodies is directly proportional to the entity of curvature that is used. In the case of transmedia, the mass of bodies depends on the richness of their contents and the media alterations of a project. The motion depends on the popularization process and the operational use (through the communicative system) made by each of the involved media.



Img. 3.1 Saddle or Sphere Curvature of a two asset communicative system (web e tv), each with its own positive (lineup and amplification) or negative (repetition and dispersion) trends.

SyFy Channel and game company Trion Worlds. The story deals with life in the refugee town of St. Louis nine years after an invasion of aliens. Both TV series and video game feed off each other's content from the very start: same setting, identical characters, complementary experiences of the audience. The public could indeed interact with the narrative on a regular base, shifting from TV passive vision onto videogame engagement, all based on the very same narrative situations. Paradigmatic example of a *continual narrative interplay* between the online video game and the television series, *Defiance* was a transmedia experience with a spherical curvature. At the end of season one, *Defiance* created more active intervention spaces for the public, taking a saddle curvature form through online dissemination of content independently produced by their audience.

2. *Twin narratives* are those narrative forms which are carried out simultaneously on two different channels or media, presenting characters, plots and sets which run parallel without intersecting, as if they were running on train tracks.



Img. 3.2 Defiance (2013). Up, the official website and a tv screenshot; down the MMoRPG and character sheet of one of the narrative's main characters.

Curvature represents a vital coordinate not only for structuring the communication system of a transmedia project, but more importantly for checking its endurance during the course of its implementation, that is while the content in the different media assets are published, and later, in the months after its presence in the media, in order to estimate its effect and long-lasting grip on the public.

In TV shows, for example, there is a very practical reason for creating content that lives on traditional media and at the same time online and on social media. The goal is to keep any narrative in the public conversation as much as possible, to create buzz and build awareness. TV shows go off the air for long periods of time between seasons (or even between episodes). It's extremely beneficial to have entrance media campaign that can bridge the gaps in the narrative when the show is off the air. — *Tim Kring – transmedia creator and showrunner (Heroes, Crossing Jordan)*

Depending on the editorial features which we have so far investigated, and once the curvature of the given project's

communication system, we shall choose one of the three possible solutions for planning the relationship between the different media asset activated, that is to say *supportive*, *competitive* and *omnivorous*.

SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

In the supportive communication system (from supportive media), the different media give all their own contribution to the success of the project, are complementary to each other and support each other's actions. The different assets that form the narrative integrate, share content and information and suggest the audiences stories, experiences and rewards. They create touch points and bridges between one medium and the other so that their communities can enjoy best communicative practices and get stimulated into carrying out interactive *skill flows*³, thus participating into the content creation processes. In order to achieve such an objective supportive communication systems generally use a common narrative topic, that is a 'what' the audience can talk about each one using its own language and technological tools aiming at developing messages, thematic itineraries or original interpretations.

The basic dynamics acting in the audience in the fruition of a supportive communication system are:

- the passage from a synchronous to an asynchronous communication in the different media;
- the use of dramaturgical hooks to link one media to the other;
- the use of mirror content in the different media involved in the project;

3. According to Pierre Lévy (*Collective... cit.*) *skill flows* are a increase in the sensorial and emotional skills happening in media fruition thanks to the experimentation of new forms of interaction and fruition, both individual and collective.

An example, again taken from my own personal experience. In the occasion of the *Sin City: a Dame to Kill for* (2014) movie launch, film directed by Frank Miller and Robert Rodriguez, I have coordinated a transmedia project partnered in Italy by Lucky Red Film, distributor of the movie, based on a complex supportive system⁴. It was called *Sin City Italy* and the bouquet consisted in:

- the official movie website;
- viral videos in CG (emulating the style of the graphic novel);
- viral live action videos focusing on the presence of the three primary colors visualized in the movie;
- artwork for social media campaign;
- 3D characters;
- audio landscapes;
- game app;
- two video mapping project sharing real/digital worlds.

The project ended with a reserved encounter with Miller and Rodriguez in Rome, and the focus of the campaign was to spread Miller's imagery and the story world of the film creating "an Italian Sin City" with landscapes, characters and videos shared on social networks and in the real world. The design of the communicative system linked the different media asset with multiple bridge and touchpoint while the design of all the artworks made it a successful example of how to contribute a movie with a precise, combined concept aesthetics and mechanics. The visual impact and the character design of the movie was replicated both in the digital and in real world.

4. Project coordinated for Lucky Red Film and IED Rome. Contributors (Video Design, Sound Design, Interaction Design, CG Animation): Francesco Della Rovere, Giulio Raimondi, Dung Botta, Tommaso Costantini, Sabrina Gnisci, Francesca Panella, Manuela Paniccia, Savino Rasola, Ilaria Trepiccioni, Marco Assenza, Lorenzo Maria Benassi, Alessandro Rinaudo, Gabriel Alvarez, Alessandro Cicione, Barbara Magrelli).



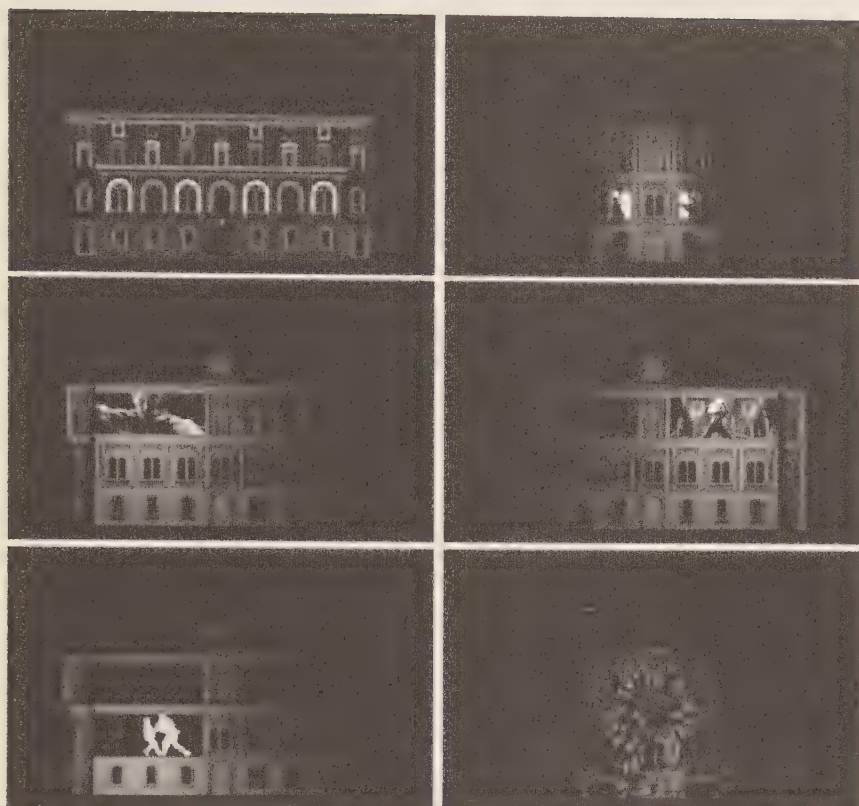
Img. 3.3 Sin City – A dame to kill for. Supportive System for the Italian launch of the movie.

The final stage of the campaign was planned to be a great video mapping experience in the centre of the town. The plot of the installation began with a car entering the square at high speed, with a group of alcoholics, strange characters, on board. Men and women hopped off the car and started fighting in the street when the two protagonists, a man and a woman, jumped into the building and their silhouette immediately appeared through a line of windows. Then the villain got into the story and started fighting with the man, until he threw him out. At that point, some of the windows showed scenes from the movie and the story ended with a passionate kiss of the two silhouettes, a picture that launched the logo of the movie. Different styles and a different storytelling experiences, simple and emotional, were strengthened with a strong visual impact and a common *pidgin* (the Miller's black/white/red style) in the motion graphic and in static works and the inserts of the movie projected on the facade. Design and story, or better to say in this case: *design for story*.

COMPETITIVE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

In the transmedia competitive system, different *ad hoc* versions are created for each of the media involved in the project in terms of technology, dramaturgy and consumption. Multiple media 'split up their roles' triggering antagonistic movements within the audiences. They rely on each individual medium's autonomy in relation to the project, and aim at creating a more customized dialogue within each medium's own community. Since the creation of additional narrative versions requires further time and money and decreases the efficiency of the control exercised by the broadcaster, the use of a transmedia competitive system is often discouraged by the corporate management. Therefore, let's see two examples of competitive system, one negative and one positive, to deep into their fundamental dynamics.

The first is *24*, TV series created by Joel Surnow and Robert Cochran (2001-2010). Due to its framed-narrative structure, *24* combines the narrative pattern of a TV reality game with that of traditional fiction. Each season of the series tells about a



Img. 3.4 Sin City – A dame to kill for. Videomapping experience for the Italian launch in Rome.

sequence of events that takes place during a single day, through 24 episodes of 60 minutes and each lasting for an hour of real time in the fiction. By using frame narratives, that is the division of the pattern into subframes (*split screens*), the audience simultaneously follows different narrative levels and stories developed through multiple subplots. But this is not the end of the process. Throughout the years, the series has expanded into different media, specifically video games, mobile episodes, webisodes, books, mobile games and comics. Nonetheless, the story world of the tale was not based on a strong nebula, and all the media followed the same narrative pattern: The Hero's Journey of the protagonist Jack Bauer, an agent of the Counter

Terrorist Unit of Los Angeles, who through the different seasons of the tale and the multiple media of the communication system of the project, just moved from the west coast of the U.S. to Washington and then to New York. As a consequence, the different outcomes of the series (video games, mobisodes, celebrative books, and so on...) ended up fragmenting the audience and competing with each other in an excessively direct way, wearing out themselves and the series survival.



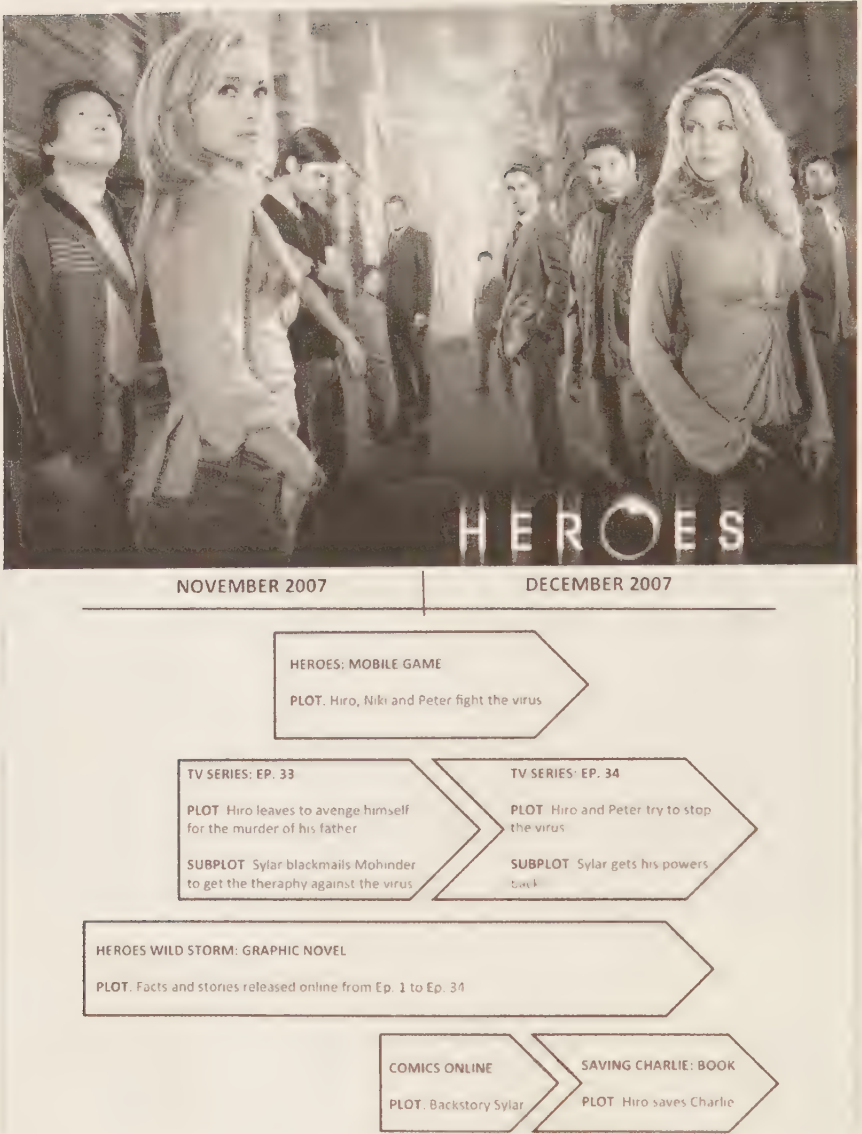
Img. 3.5 24 (2001-2010) Products and contents of the Series.

The second example brings us to the first case of TV series built on an *helix dramatic scheme*: *Heroes* (2006-2010). Created and written by Tim Kring, the story chronicles the lives of a group of people, initially unknown to each other, with supernatural powers. The structure of the project, which was originally conceived as a series of volumes (the 4 seasons) divided into chapters (the 77 episodes), was very complex and needed a deeper analysis that would have never been possible in a shortened TV series. As the show progressed, five more web series were released. This online version was not very different

from the series, and later changed its name to *Heroes Evolutions*, aiming at better explaining the ‘universe’ and ‘mythology’ (fantasy elements linked to science-fiction phenomena, to the real history of the world, to religions and communal, anthropological traditions) on which the tale was based. The transmedia bouquet counted a comic series (*9th Wonders*) too, a graphic novel (actually a long web comic in 160 episodes published by Aspen Comics after the broadcast of each episode), iStories and a serialized documentary (a ‘making of’ for each season) called *Heroes Unmasked*. But since the beginning of the project, Kring successfully planned for a progressive evolution of the story world visible throughout all of the media involved in an effective competitive system.

OMNIVOROUS COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

In the omnivorous communicative system, the different media are subjected to the presence of a central platform on which all the others depend (both the official ones and the ones autonomously created by the audience). An omnivorous communication system favors the creation of a common *agorà* for all the authors of a project, and, above all, one that relies on what Umberto Eco calls the “interpretive cooperation” of the audience. This is a condition which is part of the “text pragmatics” of all content of a project and is the real conversational topic. More than what happens with supportive and competitive systems, transmedia projects with an omnivorous communicative system are based on a basic imaginative and publishing *pidgin* which is shared between the sender and the receiver. For this reason, and because of its technological, economic and publishing aspects, the most effective medium in the omnivorous system is the web. In addition to being cheaper than other media, the web can foster communities loyal to a project because of the speed at which it can be updated, the high dose of creativity that can be expressed in its frames, and the opportunity to upload – thanks to a single



Img. 3.6 Heroes narrative space in season two finale (2007). In a month, while the TV narrative develops with the storylines of each single character, the other media involved present with an in-depth investigation of other parts of the story world. For instance, in a non-linear way with backstories of the characters (in videogames and in

the webseries), or with simultaneous narratives (in graphic novels and online comics), or also with parallel narratives and spin-offs (in the novels inspired by the series).

publishing tool (panel) – the contents of all technological platforms of the project. An example?

Madmen is a TV series (technically speaking, a *period drama*) produced by Lionsgate Television since 2007, distributed by broadcaster AMC and winner of many awards. The series tells stories of business and feelings set in a New York advertising agency in the Sixties. Its communication was from the beginning entrusted with an omnivorous communication system web centred, with an official website and many games which made the audience's familiarity with the characters grow so much as to lead the public to create fake Twitter profiles for their favourite characters. Digital voices and images which were, in a very short time, frequented by thousands of users who generated an uncontrollable viral action and success to such an extent to convince AMC, that initially had stepped in with the intent of censoring the phenomenon, to change its strategy. And it was a wise move indeed, since it was quite soon clear how those Twitterer were advertising professionals, PR manager and clerks, that is to say representative of the same world who were telling the story of the series in an omnivorous fashion.

THE TRANSMEDIA BOUQUET

Building up a transmedia communication system is a complex process, starting from the moment of the conception of the idea, to the official release of the project. It articulates in different productive steps, each with its own control and assessment mechanisms. Once form, curvature and reference model (supportive, competitive, omnivorous) are defined, it is time to work on the construction of the transmedial bouquet, that is the comprehensive definition of the complex of platforms which



Img. 3.7 Madmen and its supportive communication system. Above to below: the series' website, the online games, the pictures of the twitter users who created profiles using the faces of their beloved characters.

shall host the project's content. There are three essential actions to do that:

- the use of the *platform selection layout*;
- the selection of the communication system's *rabbit hole* and the *points of entry* of each platform;
- the use of the *transmedia roll out*.

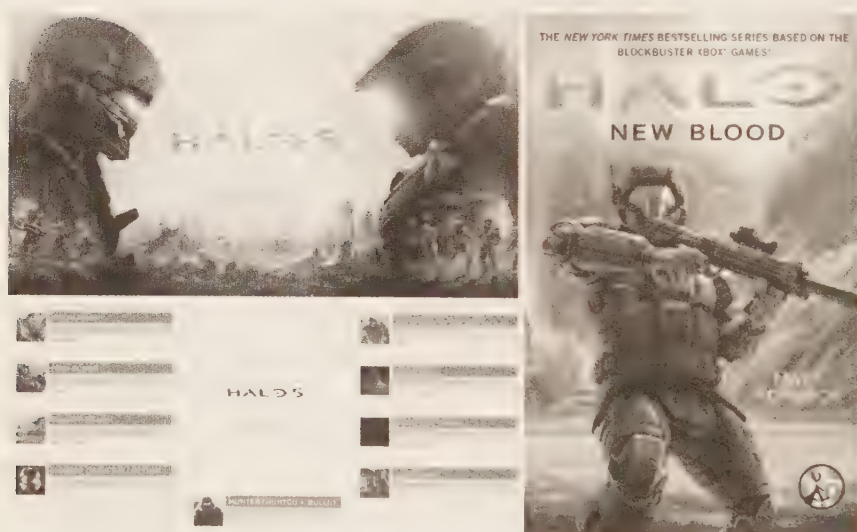
In the following paragraphs we shall analyse those actions one by one, considering the different progressive steps to be taken and the essential documents to be produced in order to create a project's transmedia bouquet. Before proceeding, though, let me present with an example.

In transmedia and videogame history, *Halo* is one of the most successful and long-running videogame series which, in time, was able to renovate its capacity of creating effective transmedia bouquets even after the creation of the second trilogy and the passage to a new developer, 343 Industries. More specifically, it was the second episode of the new saga that has represented a milestone in the franchise's transmedial strategies. *Halo 5: Guardians* (released in October 2015) portrayed two fireteams of human supersoldiers, respectively the Blue team, led by Master Chief John-117, and Osiris, led by Spartan IV Jameson Locke. The game was a first-person shooter integrated with exploration and quests more than its predecessors. The transmedia bouquet consisted in:

- the live-action series *Nightfall* (an introduction to Agent Locke, already present in *Halo 2*) released in late 2014, to bridge the precedent chapter of the game with *Halo 5* addictive universe;
- the comic series *Escalation*, in 4 volumes (3 published before the release of the game and 1 after it, as an introduction to the Blue Team activities);
- three novels: *New Blood* (where Buck becomes a Spartan,

released together with the second volume of the comic series, in march 2015), *Hunters in the dark* (released four months before the game) and *Last Night* (an exploration of Blue Team, released one month before the game);

- the radio series podcast *Hunt the Truth*, in two seasons, the first released simultaneously with the comic series and the second novel, who investigates the Master Chief's background, and the second with the third novel and the third volume of *Escalation*, focusing on violent attacks on human colonies;
- the animated series *The Fall of Reach* (based on the novel on the same name, focusing the origins of the Blue Team and Spartan II Program), released two months after the game.



Img. 3.8 Halo 5: Guardians (2015) and its transmedia bouquet. Videogame, novel, animated series and live action; podcast and expansion to other media (Infographics from: media.comicbooks.com).

A universe particularly rich with content, based on a 'bible' of transmedia universe mythology (*The Halo Story Bible*) created by Jeff Gomez's Starlight Runner Entertainment for the previous

chapter of the series, with the aim of defining the canonical Halo Universe, and representing just another example of a transmedia bouquet based on a consistent, supportive communication transmedia system.

PLATFORM SELECTION LAYOUT

When choosing the media platform that shall distribute each single part of the narrative to the transmedia communication system, it is necessary to focus on mainly to structural conditions:

- the platform must be the most adequate to the content to be published in terms of language, technology, target and audience consumer modality;
- the platform's strengths and weaknesses must be carefully balanced by the content published in the other platforms of the communication system.

Each platform has its own editorial features and specific functions which make it more or less adequate to the needs of the single asset of a project. For example, in order to favour open access to its content, a TV platform will be a better choice, while to make payment during the course of use, the net shall be preferable. Also, in order to allow a more interactive use, a game or an installation will be the best option, while if we need to manage apps on the move, we'll chose mobile. And so on... Again here, we shall present an example drawn from my own personal experience.

Like the famous article which certified the first official definition of transmedia storytelling by MIT professor Henry Jenkins, my first transmedia independent project *Proiettiliperscrittori* (*Bullets for writers*) dates back to 2003, and was a storytelling lab for writers based on a *user-determined narrative experience*⁵. Initially spread through radio and webtv, its competitive system was supported by a blog and a novel to be strongly influenced by the audience. A short resume of that experience can stress the

importance of the platform selection in the development of a transmedia project.

Proiettiliperscrittori was a radio show made of twelve episodes (30 minutes each) of advice on writing broadcast by a speaker and combined with examples taken from cinema and television narratives. At the end of each show, an expert speaking from home would give his ratings and evaluations via blog and his contribution was submitted to the show's community's own evaluation. The debate carried on during the following five days, while on the sixth, the one before the next show, a new subject would be launched, with preparatory links, bibliography and filmography shared with the public. The project went as far as to allow the listener to implement the last three radio shows and one was even read by a regular follower. A video version was, in the meantime, available on Web TV, linked to the *Proiettiliperscrittori* blog. But the most important change, and its moment of highest degree of interactivity, was reached thanks to the connection to publishing and the printed paper. In the summer of 2004, in fact, right after the end of the radio show, I launched a new format via blog: a textual web fiction divided into episodes called *Fuoco ci vuole* (*Fire, we need*). Following this format, an episode of the series was broadcast online on the blog around midnight every three days. Each episode of *Fuoco ci vuole* was divided into two parts, with a ten-minute break in the process of online publishing. Each part was enriched by a photograph or image found on the web or submitted by the readers. Moreover, as had already happened with the radio show, the following day was dedicated to the readers' comments. In the next 24 hours the episode was corrected and reorganized following the suggestions which emerged in the online debate.

Choral novel and an example of non-linear narrative, *Fuoco ci vuole* told the story of a clumsy summer when four friends go

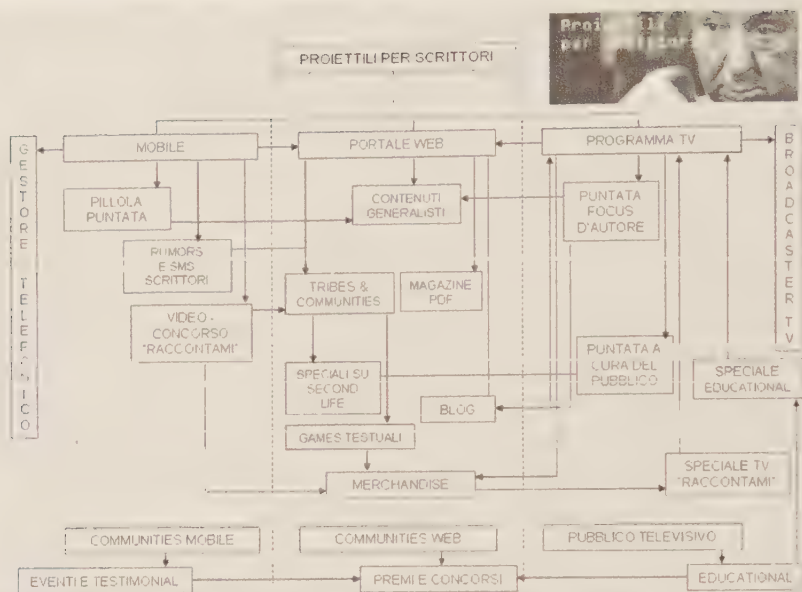
5. About the definition of user-determined narrative: Sermon, P., *The emergence of user- and performer-determined narratives in telematic environments*, in Zapp, A. (ed.), *Networked Narrative Environments: As Imaginary Spaces of Being*, 2004.

through all sorts of adventures in a deserted and hostile Rome. The characters were living, both individually and chorally, four variations of the twelve stations paradigm, and the story was rich with filmic and literary quotes, which were sent to the public in the form of a contest. The hunt for the locations named in the story was frantic, as pictures and comments were coming in a flood and soon represented a further modality of interactive consumption. The public immediately elected its favourite character among the four in the plot and kept following its role in the narrative, contributing with suggestions for plots, relationships, and dialogues (some of which were used, while others were not), always in a perspective of (online) reasoning and confrontation. Supported by a wide community of faithful followers of the whole project, only two weeks after the twenty-sixth and last episode was posted on line, *Fuoco ci vuole* was bought by a publisher and went through a further *remediation*⁶: initially conceived as a radio screenplay, it later transformed into a web fiction, and in the spring of 2005 became the first transmedia novel ever published in Italy. Thanks to its audience. Together with its audience. The second season of *Proiettiliperscrittori* (2006) was aired on the radio, on a webtv and was enriched with textual games, online video contests ('Raccontami') with an extra asset of 'merchandise for writers' specifically linked to the TV asset of the show, as it is clear in the project's platform layout⁷.

A short recap describing the basic actions necessary for a correct selection of the most adequate platform in transmedia communication systems can be at this stage very useful to authors, designers and producers. The essential coordinates of platform selection layout therefore are:

6. Bolter, J. D., Grusin, R. *Remediation*, 2003.

7. The *platform selection layout* is a diagram representing how the content are spread in the different platforms of a transmedia project. It does not contains chronological information but portrays all the different relations between the media and the authority of the various works created by the authors (up) and by the users in grassroots modality (down).



Img. 3.9 Platform selection layout of the transmedia communication system of Proiettiliperscrittori season two (2006). Centre: the project's main asset (the web) along with mobile and TV. In the upper side of the template the authors' contents; in the lower side those created by the audience of each asset of the project.

- the creation of projects structured in different narrative segments, rather than on large portions of tale entrusted with a single media asset;
- using all the characters in a story, so that the public has the possibility of sympathizing with their own match and hating their own opposite;
- using all the most symbolic location of the imaginative universe, so to contaminate different narrative genres and create more contest arena for the public;
- planning experiences that can easily migrate from a narrative segment to another, from an asset to another of the transmedia bouquet;

- creating experiences forcing the public to act (calls to action), so that their actions become public and provoke debate and emulation;
- planning reward mechanisms, either direct or indirect, in different assets of the communication system;
- considering editorial spaces in which it is possible to receive feedback from the users, thus connecting them with the assessment of the general endurance of a project;
- insert secondary paths where to shift new parts of a narrative – or its mutations – had one of the platforms produced the expected performances;
- disseminate the different parts of a narrative with clues and details in order to create the possibility of future spin-offs or sequels of the original story;
- choose the platforms and – once the strengths and weak points are checked – it is time to finally set the communication system.

RABBIT HOLE AND POINT OF ENTRY

At the end of a frenzy chase, Alice meets the White Rabbit and suddenly starts falling into the void. This is how her adventure in Wonderland starts, in a universe where anything can happen because anything is possible; just like it is with transmedia. For this reason *rabbit hole* is also the definition by which the primary point of entry of an editorial project distributed on more media simultaneously goes. For example we can think of a claim at the end of a TV spot, a link on a website, a message reaching the public at home or a viral video which starts mysteriously to be watched on the net...

If the point of entry is the 'entrance door' of each medium involved in a transmedia communication system, the rabbit hole (RH) is its primary doorlock. If the point of entry is the bomb, the rabbit hole is its primer. If the point of entry is a moment

where to get information, the rabbit hole is – on the contrary – immersive. The rabbit hole is the first singing voice, the first content published, the flint that starts it all.

The number of entrance doors of a communication system depends on the opportunity of fruition we want the public to have, not the other way around. The most used practice is that of creating project with one single rabbit hole and different points of entry, one for each platform. At the beginning of transmedia studies, the Australian pioneer Christy Dena was the first to notice that if a project integrates many different media platforms, it inevitably offers more points of entry for the audience. Having multiple points for an audience to get involved is a great opportunity, but at the same time, can prove to be very risky. The points of entry, both primary and secondary, of a project have to be set and organized in the system with great attention, understanding their role and how they interact with the project's fundamental moments of navigation. The audience must not get to a project's primary point of entry in a traumatic or unsuspecting way, but rather, by consciously moving towards it. In some occasion it is possible to replicate the same rabbit hole or the same point of entry on more platforms, even though this generally creates some confusion. At the same time it is risky to use a single rabbit hole in one medium because it can pointlessly limit and obstruct the audience's access to the project, just like building one single elevator for a whole shopping mall. On the other hand, using one point of entry for each asset of the project would inevitably lead to the creation of a multidirectional system where audiences might risk to unawaresly move away from the narrative core of a story, thus creating a sort of spinning or star system.

For all of these reasons the most frequently used solution is that of planning at least two entrance doors for a single transmedia project: a rabbit hole and a priority point of entry, to be activated one right after the other on two different channels so that the

primer of the story shall be evident to at least two different typology of consumers⁸. An example?

Two years after its project *Voyeur*, which shot the different apartments of a building giving the spectator the opportunity to autonomously choose which window to enter to consume the story, HBO came up in September 2009 with a new narrative experiment called *Imagine*, using a physical rabbit hole, to which it immediately added a digital point of entry. New York, Philadelphia and Washington hosted, with no previous notice or announcement, in sequence, the installation of a huge black cube on whose sides the images of an innovative hyperserial were projected⁹; it was possible to enjoy it in a different way according to the angle one was watching it from. At the same time, online, the official website of the project (hboimagine.com) allowed users to enjoy the very same interactive experience by spinning – in a 3D menu – the same cube and changing the point of view of the narrative.

In the form of a 41 pieces puzzle game, content including video, audio files, letters and images connected to each other created a unique, complex tale, as if they were parts of a gigantic tapestry. And the audience passed from the real world to the online project (and back) enjoying an interactive story and game-like experience that deepens the more one explores it (realized by the BBDO NY agency and released online by The Barbarian Group).

8. To those of rabbit hole and point of entry another definition must be added: that of *cheese holes*, that is 'narrative voids' the public can use to customize or create original content, distancing from those created by the authors in the transmedia narrative. They represent a quite risky opportunity which at the same time might turn out to be very productive and satisfying from the point of view of new audiences.
9. The *hyperserial* is a serial audiovisual product broadcast on the web, which has links and references to other online resources useful for the fruition of the narrative.



Img. 3.10 Imagine (2009). Rabbit hole with its physical street installation and virtual point of entry on the web.

TRANSMEDIA ROLL OUT

Time management in a transmedia communication system is crucial for the creation of the best sequence for the publication of its content. It depends on the combination of three variables:

- beginning and duration of all the stories of the communicative system;
- beginning and duration of the experiences within the communicative system;
- beginning and duration of the project in all the different assets of the communicative system.

The narrative forms and the technological platforms used in a transmedia narrative always generate a *metaverse* which connects authors and users for a definite time that goes from the discovery (through the rabbit hole) to the closure of the story. In this view we have:

- transmedia projects introducing a following narrative (for example, a movie launch campaign);

- project running parallel to the narrative (for example, a videogame created with the aim of 'playing' the character of a TV series);
- projects following and 'stretching the life' of a narrative (for example a number of documentaries bringing temporarily the characters of a novel back to life).

Transmedia roll out is a form of systematic representation of the sequence of publication of all the content of a project's communicative system, from rabbit hole to official release and the temporary follow up in the days immediately after the release. The roll out is divided into platforms and tells the duration and the type of interaction and relation existing between the different media involved in the project. It is possible to visualize those relations by using visualization and hierarchy tools such as arrows, lines, segments, dotted lines, boxes and so on. An example?

In 2012, for the launch of his sci-fi movie *Prometheus*, a work structured as a prequel of the *Alien* saga, director Ridley Scott and Scott Free Entertainment chose to distribute the narrative using what I call a *bungee narrative experience*¹⁰, that is when the content are produced going forward and backwards in the narrative universe of the story, revealing step by step small segments of the story itself. In Scott's case the objective was to mark a precise distance from the movies of the previous saga.

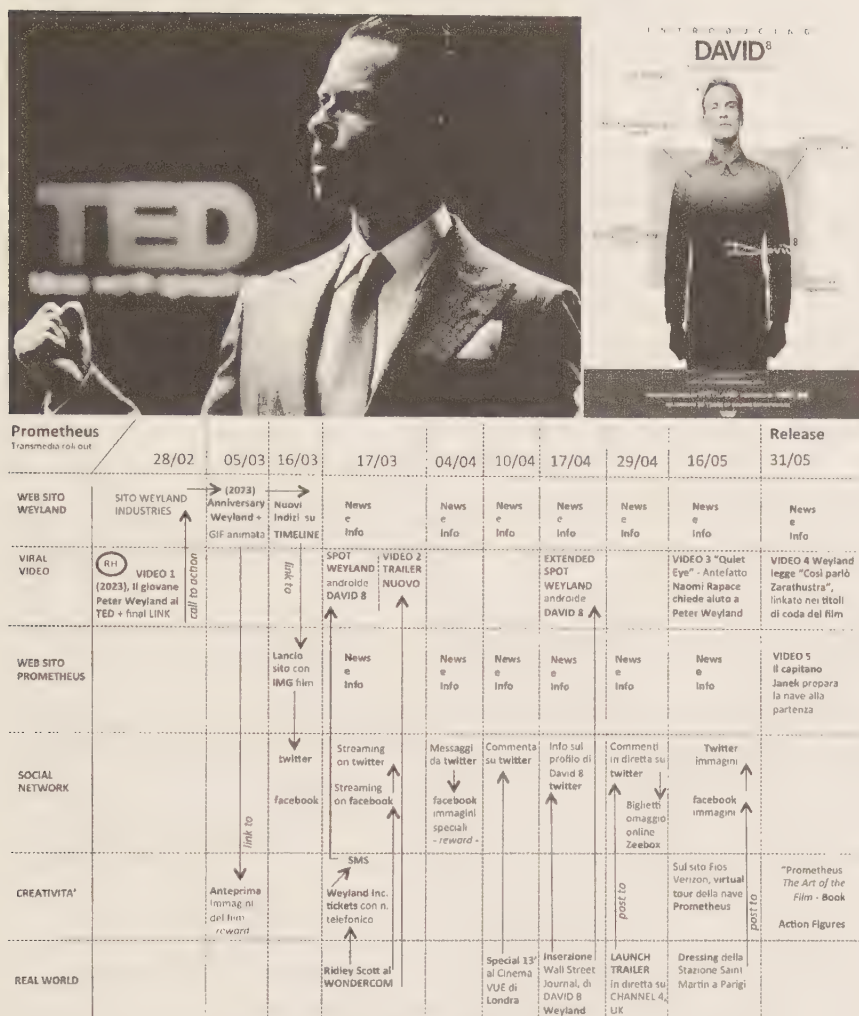
Prometheus tells the story of a group of scientists who starts searching for the origins of human life, following the traces of an extraterrestrial species in an exploratory mission funded by Weyland Industries in 2073. The rabbit hole of the transmedia project, which lasted three months in total, was made of three

10. What I call *bungee narrative* are those narratives endlessly going forward and backward in time in the course of the story, with one or more characters to whom the different dramaturgical lines of the story refer to. This is what happens, for example, in Tom Tykwer's, Andy and Lana Wachowski's *Cloud Atlas* (2012), taken from the 2004 novel with the same title, written by David Mitchell.

viral videos promoting secondary aspects of the story, which were not in the movie or would come before the story's beginning. The first portrays Weyland Industries President, Peter Weyland who, as a young man, talks at a TED Conference in 2023 telling us his personal vision for our future. Future will start with fire, he says, as it happened in the myth of Prometheus. Men and women are the new gods of the technological era, and their goal is to change the world. How? With an ultimate, interstellar expedition on another planet.

The movie's imagery was in that way transcodifying the most important brand of conferences devoted to technology, entertainment and design and was broadcast on the portal of TED itself where it reached millions of viewers. A fake blog promoting the conference completed the picture. To those content the fake Weyland Corporation website was added: it presented with an animated gif allowing the audience to discover some preview footages of the movie and, later on, *Prometheus's* official website and its social network profiles. Some days later, during his talk at the Wondercom in Anaheim, Scott had business cards with a phone number which gave access to the vision of a second clip distributed. Also, a spot promoting the production of the new droid David 8, which, in the movie, supports the Prometheus spaceship crew.

The spot is also quoted in an ad on "The Wall Street Journal" and on a Twitter profile created to answer the clients interested in buying the droid. Later in the campaign, single events in London (a special show) and Paris (a metro station branded with images and materials inspired by the movie) anticipate the publication of the third video: *Quiet Eye*, where the protagonist, Noomi Rapace, addresses in a videolog the now old Peter Weyland asking him to fund her mission. All these artworks were not a hard sell for the movie, but they built up a curious and original experience intimately connected to the film. Another clue to dig into its complex imaginative universe.



Img. 3.11 Prometheus (2012). The TED Conference presented as a rabbit hole for the launch of the movie. The advertisement published on "The Wall Street Journal" right after the video of the start of the production of the android David 8 and the transmedia roll out of the American launch of the movie.

The production of extra content of the movie's editorial project did however not stop even after the movie was launched. In American cinema theatres, thanks to a link in the final credits it

was possible in fact to access to the vision of two more video: in the first Weyland recited an abstract from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* by Friedrich Nietzsche; in the second Captain Janek prepared the spaceship and showed all the detail of his mission. And all these contents were collected and disguised as an official Weyland Corporation app. The road to the movie was already paved and the corpus of material for the transmedia project supporting the narrative gave a significant contribution to its success, particularly in countries where the different content had actually reached and contaminated the audience, as the transmedia roll out of the American launch of *Prometheus* clearly shows.

QUESTIONS ON TIMING

In 1967, John Archibald Wheeler, an American theoretical physicist, was the first to put a name to “black holes” even though he realized that they were neither totally “black” (because they produce particles whose weak evaporation can be recorded), nor were they “holes” (but dying celestial bodies, whose surface escape velocity is so high that it exceeds that of light, making them seemingly invisible)¹¹. They are a type of cyclopean tunnel with an intense and concentrated gravitational field that attracts everything during its rotation, even light¹². Wheeler’s theories about mass, charge and angular momentum as well as those about the universe’s wave function greatly contribute to today’s transmedia studies. These theories are particularly influential in the creation of a hypothesis about the future of new narrative, as well as new technological methods of global storytelling. One of Wheeler’s most popular quotes is: “A black hole has no hair”, referring to the fact that any object or signal, once consumed by a black hole, disappears without any chance of coming back. Even so, it leaves a trace because its mass and charge affects the gravitational attraction of the black hole¹³. How is this relevant? Well, what happens in a dark and atemporal black hole is

11. Wheeler, P. A., Rees, M., *Black Holes, Gravitational Waves, and Cosmology*, 1974.

12. Davies, P., *The Last Three Minutes*, 1994.

13. Bekenstein, J., *Black-Hole Thermodynamics*, “Physics Today”, 1980.

comparable to the story of new transmedia: the collective imagination of oral, analogue and digital traditions that has been developed over millennia is now at death's door, but it continues to influence modern day storytelling. Black holes are ruled internally by "other" thermodynamics, which require adaptations and exceptions to universal laws. This also happens in the contemporary storytelling: traditional paradigms and narratives are still used in the new transmedia interfaces, but they are subject to revolutions concerning how stories are perceived, imagined and created, not to mention the horizon of events or laws of falling bodies in the cone of a black hole... The similarities and possible implications are numerous. So, the following sections are dedicated to different kinds of intervention – whether temporary or permanent – between one or more media platforms in a transmedia project.

Although I shall, in the following paragraphs, take into consideration only the most important and frequent forms of mutation, it must be observed how the genesis of 'open processes' in this field is one of the most vivid front in transmediality. A permanent research lab to investigate on techniques and experiments frequented with deep curiosity and on a regular basis by producers from all over the world.

STOP & GO EFFECT

During the course of the story, one of the middle segments of a project is suspended, while other parts continue their course, and then the stalled segment restarts as if nothing has happened. In the meanwhile, though, the alteration of the time-line of the story has forced the audience into new directions and the media to temporarily take full possess of the story, or to exploits its subplots or marginal aspects, thus growing in self-sufficiency and giving a significant contribution to the story's endurance. An important strategy, especially under the perspective of making cohesion and inner balances of the communicative system more solid. For example, in a transmedia promotion of a movie, online trailers all around the world simultaneously disappear from the

web as soon as TV and radio commercials are aired, and then return online a few days after the movie has come out.

DOMINO EFFECT

A particularly emotional narrative in one of the multiple media platforms or a particular asset of a transmedia project becomes temporarily more important than the others. This dominant asset changes the flow and direction of all the other assets and acts as the dominant 'driver' until the conclusion of the project. Result: the project allows the different assets of the communication system to 'talk' to each other in a different way and at the same time to amaze the public in its perception of the narrative. An important strategy especially when it comes to 'rejuvenate' the imagery of a transmedia franchise or portmanteau.

SPIN-OFF EFFECT

Like some satellites that take advantage of a planet's gravity to move somewhere else, one of the platforms in a transmedia project can temporarily stick to another medium in order to strengthen or revive its role or its content and continue towards a secondary goal with respect to the project as a whole. This is a strategy which forces the author and the transmedia producer to attentively and frequently supervise the comprehensive integrity of the system, in order to avoid collisions and imbalances in the distribution of a project's contents. Such a strategy proves very effective when we need to strengthen the role of an asset whose performance is not meeting the expectations, or which is having a weak start and an uneffective merge into the communication system.

DOPPLER EFFECT

At some stage during the development of a project, one of the media involved in a transmedia system changes its identity or language, altering its appearance as well as the comprehensive

balance of the narrative. This mechanism mirrors what happens in nature with energy and sound: from an animal's cry as reaching out to us, to the different shades of a "color," or the temperature of the stars. This editorial strategy is especially useful in order to expand the media universe of a narrative whose asset and language are not initially planned as part of the communication system. The expected result new communities and users to join the project.

An example? Since 2012, a mysterious killer has been stalking Italian Renaissance courts. His name is Ezio Auditore (or should I say, Desmond Miles), and as it is with avengers, he is very determined and very skillful with both 'time' and... blades! For the publication of the second game in the *Assassin's Creed* saga Ubisoft decided to use for its first time, to improve and expand upon the transmedia variations that were created for the first installment of the game (in 2007). Ten days before *Assassin's Creed: Discovery's* official release a Playstation Portable game: *Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines* was published. Then, after the game's launch, Ubisoft published both online and on TV *Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines*, a series of three short movies dedicated to the *backstories* of the imaginative universe of the game¹⁴. Soon a series of novels dedicated to the various adventures of the protagonists, additional online videos, and a collection of action figures were published too. Each platform in the project added something to the universe of the game, and each publication provided a useful point of entry which allowed further explorations into the story. The brand's world making, based on historical and adventure literary genres, was thus supported by the milking actions carried out by means of movie suggestions (for example with the cut scenes from the movie the public could find both in the game and in the short movies), or in the literary references used for the chronological and geographical re-enactments in the saga.

14. *Backstories* are events or episodes in the life of the characters of a story which happened before the plot starts; they are inserted into the narrative through flashbacks, digressions or narrative frames.



Img. 3.12 Time shift in the Assassin's Creed's story world. From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, to the American Revolution, with

movie cut scenes supporting the game experience, until the 2016 movie and further.

Assassin's creed tells the story of a New York barman whose ancestors were part of the Assassins Cult who, captive in some Pharma Corporation labs controlled by the Templars, is forced to live into his forefathers memories through a time machine called Animus.

From Altaïr Ibn La-Ahad to Ezio Auditore and Connor Kenway, and so forth, the imaginative universe of the narrative goes from the Middle Ages to the Age of Crusades (with the 2007 game), from Humanism to Italian Renaissance and American Revolution, and on, all this thanks to a transmedia bouquet in continuous progress. It is made of video games, short movies, novels, graphic novels, a dedicated encyclopedia, online games and, more recently a 2016 movie directed by Justin Kurtzel and starring Michael Fassbender, which, also in this case, presents a version of the story which is slightly different from the mothership we all know from the videogame. Yet, this story too has proven to be productive and effective in order to reinforce both the expanded universe and the *additive comprehension* of its audience. The goal? An evolving universe which change day by day, like the one of *24*, but in this case, without losing the continuity and empowering the anti-heroic portrait of the main character/punisher which works as the main driver in all the transmedial declinations of the story world.

WORKSHOP 3 – THE COMMUNICATIVE SYSTEM

The ideas, stories and experiences which can be part of the communication system of the project are on the table. It is now time to give the things their form and mould the communication system according to the duration and the curvature of its own content. It will be useful, at this stage, to answer the question we have so far made. Shall my communication system develop on a flat or curved plane? Does it have a positive curvature? Shall

it be a 'sphere' or a 'saddle'? Make up your mind and verifying the endurance by investigating all the stories and the experiences of your project one by one. The move on to evaluating the relationship between the different media and create a communication system either of the supportive, the competitive or the omnivorous type. At that stage, once the grid is defined and all the pieces of the jigsaw are laid down, verify the presence of spaces for interacting with the public and of mechanisms for possible mutations – if necessary – using those 'special effects' we have dealt with in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4

CREATING TRANSMEDIA EXPERIENCES

In the first chapter we started from imagination (the universe), in the second we went to the story world, in the third to the communicative system. Now it is the time for practice and emotional competence (*experiences*).

Working on a transmedia project, whether it is a great franchise or an independent portmanteau, means, in fact creating stories and tales but above all experiences that can stimulate and suggest forms of active consumption, participation, interaction with the tale and enhancing its messages.

Transmedia projects appear to ask audiences to be more active with the worlds they experience. For instance, “the audience” has to move from watching television to visiting a website, or from reading a graphic novel to watching a movie in a theatre, or from speaking to someone on a phone to running through the streets on a mission. But these are things people do everyday anyway. The difference with transmedia is that they now do these things to experience the same fictional (or factual) world. It requires perceiving a world in all its guises, engaging with many artforms, and seeing them all as being part of some greater whole. Transmedia can at times even ask audiences to speak to characters, suggest sub-plots, create new assets, and be the protagonist. You could say audiences just haven’t been able to be themselves with entertainment before. — Christy Dena – transmedia pioneer and director of *Universe Creation 101*.

When designing the experiences of a transmedia project, it is necessary to have clear boundaries and the importance of two contiguous but distinct and determining levels both in the creative process and in the practice of public consumption: *perception* and *imagination*.

To put first the issue of studies concerning the collective imagery was Jean-Paul Sartre in his essay *L'Imaginaire* written in 1940. Sartre analyzed the forms of reality's interpretation and the human mind's fiction, distinguishing between *perception* and *image*. The use of these two "monads" of fantasy today is a basic reading key for the creation of a transmedia tale. According to Sartre, in fact, during perception the knowledge shapes slowly, while in the image it is immediate. Exactly as a user can pay attention to an image as much as he wants, he will only find the things he brings to it. Unlike perception, in the image there is a sort of essential poverty. And, the image as image is describable only by an act of the second degree in which attention is turned away from the object and directed to the manner in which the object is given¹. Perception on the contrary is a first degree act, innate and capable of immediately exploiting within ourselves what the language scholar James Paul Gee calls 'affinity spaces'² between experience and the other, and in the case of transmedia, even between one medium and another. Finally, as we'll see, perception and image operate in a continuous dialogue between the rational mind and the emotional one, enhancing or stigmatizing the different components of the transmedia narrative, in single or many assets of the narrative. When facing the consumption of experiences part of a transmedia project, as we shall see in all the examples provided in this chapter, image describes whilst perception impresses. Image affects the

1. Sartre, J.-P., *L'immaginario. Psicologia fenomenologica dell'immaginazione*, 2007.

2. About the definition of "affinity spaces" in the learning process and in that of building up one's imagery, see Gee, J. P., *Semiotic Social Spaces and Affinity Spaces: From The Age of Mythology to Today's Schools*, in Barton, D. e Tusting, K., (ed.), *Beyond communities of practice: Language, power and social context*, 2005.

audience whilst perception connects it. And image celebrates complexity whilst perception simplifies it. An example?

Not satisfied by the outcome of its main series on the female audience, both adults and teens, Showtime production decided in 2009 to entrust its series *Dexter*, which in the second season started to be criticized as a bloody horror series with an evil protagonist, to transmedia strategies. The plot of the series, in fact, is dedicated to the adventures of the most popular serial-killer of all serial-killers, a haematologist in Miami's forensic department; in the emotional mind of a part of the audience, this caused a negative emotional repertoire that the Starlight Runner studio of New York was charged, in the brand transmedia campaign, to transform it in an ad hoc competitive communicative system for female consumers, using as the main products an animated series titled *Early Cuts*, a gaming application for iPhone, a role-playing card game and a very teen-oriented portal, titled *Follow the Code*. The result? A considerable TV rating increases and the most successful season for *Dexter*. How did they succeed? First of all, contaminating imagination with perception in two ways: giving an ironic taste to the promotion of the most paradoxical side of the series, the bizarre ethical code by which the protagonist commits his tortures, a decreasing the horror side of the series by using it just for Dexter's work as a member of the forensic department, regularizing and bringing out his background relation to blood, as a regular aspect. Finally, in one of the episodes of the Season 2 (*The Dark Defender*), since the crime scene was set in a comic-book store: "comic-book characters, allusions, and art peppered the episode, giving homage to comic-book traditions. Seeing the social buzz among comic super-fans, Showtime invited those natural ambassadors into *Dexter's* story world. The episode inspired a line of *Dexter* comic-books and other comic-inspired contents. This transmedia response activated a new platform and a new revenue stream"³. In this way, the campaign changed the

3. Zeiser, A., *Transmedia Marketing. From film and TV to games and digital media*, 2015, p. 15.

imagination of the series focusing on its perception by the public: Dexter was temporarily 'transformed' into messages and creative products from investigator and killer overlooked in a "father" awkward but pleasing. The website influenced the female audience and linked it to the series more positively; the card game and the animated webseries simplified both the criminal and professional image of the protagonist, while the app "allowed" the youngest public to conveniently bring Dexter into their handbag without ever fearing his bloody vendettas celebrated by the story.



Img. 4.1 Dexter is brutish and "masculine" on video games and TV series. Dexter "to the female" in the app and in the transmedia campaign. From killer scorned to funny chef and perfect father.

Defining the story and determining the level of perception and imagination of a project, the transmedia author lies on the boundary between the role of the imaginary and the emotional involvement of the public in his project. The question to answer becomes so: how is it possible to effectively translate the story world and its emotional universe into truly effective and shared experiences by the audience?

MEDIA SENSING AND LABELLING

In order to analyze communication systems from the point of view of emotional processes, there are two basic components: *media sensing*, that is the study of sensorial perception that is linked to the use and consumption of media, and *emotional labelling*, the identification and explication of the emotions during a tale, and the power to “tag” both the emotions and the *emotional contagion* (or *empathic selling*)⁴ of the project, in order to identify the emotions expressed by the protagonists of the tale.

Just as imagination and perception are crucial to improving the audience’s approach to experiences in a communicative system, media sensing and labelling are necessary activities for both the author and the producer in order to determine *empathy* and *inference*, or likewise, the *irritation* and *disregard* of the audiences in a transmedia project. Subjects that still aren’t well understood by transmedia experts, emotional competency, sensorial literacy and emotional intelligence are decisive factors in the success of a franchise or a portmanteau that simultaneously uses multiple media to create or promote their contents and tales.

The scope of both disciplines is the human brain, which contains two “mnemonic systems, one for the regular facts, and one for the facts that have an emotional worthiness”⁵. Before rational intervention by the cerebral cortex, which interprets the signals

4. For *emotional contagion* is the immediate and unconscious transmission of emotions from a sender to a recipient willing to experience them as if they were their own, as is stated in Hatfield E., Cacioppo J., Raspon R., *The emotional contagion*, 1997.

5. Goleman, D., *Emotional Intelligence*, 1997.

coming from our sensory organs and prepares our body for a rational reaction, in our mind 'something' has already happened, in fact. And that 'something' caused an emotion. It is a signal that is part of our emotional mind, and, in particular, of the *limbic system*, an area of our brain that consists of three elements: *thalamus*, *amygdala* and *hippocampus*.⁶

Amygdala (actually there are two of them, one for each part of our brain) is a gland which is able to react to sensory impulses, starting in our body and in a fraction of second, innate physiological responses, caused by survival instinct (even though in front of the seemingly undefended screen of a computer!): a real trigger for the emotions, whose function, in transmedia, is to worry or reassure the user in the "point of entry" momentum of the communication system or in the moment of transition from one medium to another.

The human brain, in fact, is composed of a *thalamus*, before arriving at *amygdala*, to which the perceptions coming from the sense organs arrive. The *thalamus* is a sort of "modem" that has to transform the language of the five sense organs into synaptic cerebral language. During its translation of the signal to the cerebral neocortex (*rational mind*), it simultaneously sends the message also to *amygdala* (*emotional mind*). Considering the latter is more immediate than former, it happens naturally; the emotional responses always precede the rational ones in our mind. This can have different, more or less undesirable, effects during the use of a transmedia project. In the first milliseconds of perception, we unconsciously understand what the perceived object is, but we also decide if we like it or not. This kind of cognitive unconscious analyzes the identity of what we see and formulates a proper judgment. A judgment that, well-considered, is not in the *amygdala* or in the *thalamus*, but, rather, in a third organ: the *hippocampus*, whose main function is to provide an emotional memory of an environmental context, like that of the story.

6. LeDoux, J., *Emotion and the Limbic System Concept*, *Concept in Neuroscience*, 1992.

We can call it the first impression of sensory perception, and it is the key reading key provided by the limbic system to the rational mind when it is learned, positively or negatively oriented, to the consumption of experience. This is a one-way journey, from which it will be difficult to get back the audience. And a mechanism that, multiplied by all the experiences produced on the platforms of a transmedia project, originates a delicate balance in 'maintenance of emotions'. How to safeguard such a balance? With two fundamental operations:

- creating in the course of the story and in its subplots a proper alternation between strong and weak emotions, easily accessible by the public;
- creating fast-paced passages between experience and the other, and between one emotion and the other, particularly those that are likely to develop negative perceptions in the public.

What the transmedia audience is looking for is not the construction of a universe and an unmistakable narrative, but more and more often a narration and a universe provoking active intervention and the exploration of unusual, experimental and curious cultural and communicative environments. This is why it is important to use an *emotional repertoire* shared with the public, in particular in the moments of greatest pathos, and developed within the narrative in relation to the eight main emotions (the six primary: rage, fear, joy, surprise, sadness and disgust, plus the two emotional states: love and shame). But how many possible declinations and shadings exist in triggering and managing the emotional repertoire of the human mind?

In the following diagram, I portray, as an example, a quick list of essential emotional variants that proceed from a positive to a pathological condition. The aim is to provide the designer and author with a synthetic layout for the correct conjugation of the emotional repertoire in his project.⁷

| Emotion / Emotional State | Declination (from positive to pathological) |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Anger | Fury, Outrage, Resentment, Wrath, Exasperation, Indignation, Vexation, Acrimony, Animosity, Annoyance, Irritability, Hostility. Extreme: pathological Hatred and violence. |
| Sadness | Grief, Sorrow, Cheerlessness, Gloom, Melancholy, Self-Pity, Loneliness, Dejection, Despair. Extreme: Severe Depression |
| Fear | Anxiety, Apprehension, Nervousness, Concern, Consternation, Misgiving, Wariness, Qualm, Edginess, Dread, Fright, Terror Extreme: phobia. |
| Enjoyment | Happiness, Joy, Relief, Contentment, Bliss, Delight, Amusement, Pride, Sensual Pleasure, Thrill, Rapture, Gratification, Satisfaction, Euphoria, Whimsy, Ecstasy. Extreme: Mania. |
| Surprise | Astonishment, Amazement, Wonder Extreme: Shock |
| Disgust | Contempt, Disdain, Scorn, Abhorrence, Aversion, Distaste. Extreme: Revulsion. |
| Love | Acceptance, Friendliness, Trust, Kindness, Affinity, Devotion, Adoration, Infatuation. Pathological: Agape. |
| Shame | Guilt, Embarrassment, Chagrin, Remorse, Humiliation, Regret, Mortification. Extreme: Contrition. |

Img 4.2 The Emotional Repertoire – Scheme referred to Daniel Goleman.

Thus, I was saying: tagging the emotions. Among the scientific theories that are linked to the emotional contagion, the most suitable one to the planning of narratives distributed on multiple media undoubtedly is the *Perception-Action Model* (PAM); in accordance with it, the empathetic sharing of a story or content

7. For the general layout of this list Ref. To: Goleman, D., *Intelligence ... cit.*, p. 333-334.

can be more easily obtained when the representation of the subject of the emotion is activated by a perception already held by the object/man who observes it. Thus, the subject (audience) gives its emulators (tale's protagonists) the sensations it has already felt in similar situations, and this also helps to undo the perception of the different technological interfaces of the communicative system. And this ease drives them to live and share experiences and thinking patterns that are gratifying and memorable.⁸ An example?

To build up awareness on the HBO TV adaptation of George R.R. Martin's *Games of Thrones*, the Campfire agency created in 2011 an original and effective campaign called *The Maester's Path* and built a rich transmedia bouquet that audiences could experience simultaneously at different depth. The story would have been told with an original perspective: using the five human senses and focusing on the limbic system of the audiences. The project started with the Scent. Campfire sent a Maester's Kit with ancient stills, essences and maps to a selected group of influencers and journalists, to let them smell the universe of the series and then compete in a puzzle game online. Then, it was the time for Sound. 3D sound records were inserted in an online platform to live the main location of the series and to deepen into the conspiracy atmosphere of *Games of Thrones*. Third, the Sight. A first person simulation let the audience walk in the shoes of some online characters. Then, the Touch, with an iPad application to explore the different regions of Westeros with their climate conditions and weather forecasts in real time. Finally, the Taste. In the streets of New York and Los Angeles, a truck let people taste the flavours of *Games of Thrones* with a menu created by top chef Tom Culicchio, with online video previews of his recipes. The devoted fans of the Martin's books could experience and share all these contents with a deeper level of engagement thanks to online challenges and tricks, with rewards like preview and extra contents of the series⁹. Perception

8. For an analysis of the role of psycho-technologies in media consumption, Ref. To: De Kerckhove, D., *Brainframes. Mind, technology, market*, 1991.

and Image. Media sensing and emotional labeling. The last days of the campaign were on the way. Two weeks more, and *Games of Thrones* would be aired with his first season (June 2011), entering the history of the most watched TV series of all time.

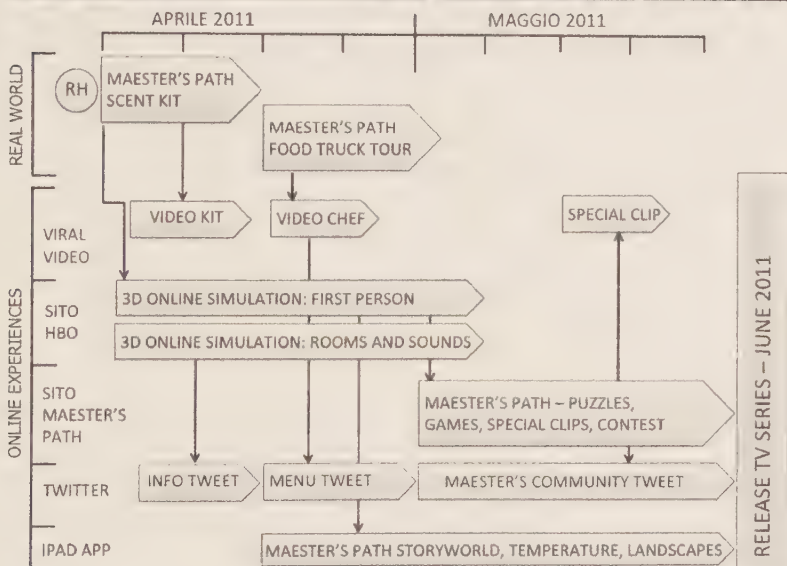
SKETCHES, WIREFRAMES AND LAYOUTS

Perception and imagination, media sensing and emotional labeling pass through the contents and stories of the transmedia project as well as through its language and its aesthetics or, in other words, through storytelling and design. Prototyping the visual imagery of a transmedia project is a matter of universes, story worlds, communicative systems and experiences that need to be constructed in a simple and inductive way, by leveling and accumulating complexity throughout design. Using sketches and design studios is extremely important in this perspective to visualize as well as to model transmedia experiences for entertainment, brands, arts and institutions. Visual reporting and visual narratives, visual storytelling and science visualization, information design and aggregation, data art, legends, layers... "Mindmapping our correlations between different pieces of content is a direct parallel to how draw up a transmedia landscape and story world for a narrative", as Simons Staffans¹⁰ declares. So, in terms of design in particular, in two circumstances the use of sketch studios turned out to be decisive in defining the experiences proposed by a campaign or project distributed over multiple media:

- the content preparation, the development of the communicative system, and the definition of the transmedia roll out;
- the design and prototyping of all the interfaces, platforms and contents distributed throughout the project.

9. <http://www.campfirenyc.com>

10. Staffans, S., *One year...cit.*



Img. 4.3 Games of Thrones (2011). The Maester's Path Scent Kit used to suggest perfumes, essences and poisons used in the story. The chef

Tom Culicchio's van, the first-person 3D simulation, one of the online puzzle games and the transmedia rolls out of the project.

As for the first point, as Brian Sullivan¹¹ states, the utility of sketch and visuals in the case of transmedia in particular, where productions and authors are often scattered in different points on the planet and working simultaneously on the basis of shared "distance" strategies and in the presence of expert audiences, comes from these considerations:

- design studios are fast and fit nicely into rapid development processes;
- design studios help you to visualize complex problems more easily, thanks to the possibility of seeing relationships and make associations in a simpler way;
- design studios help you to get early commitment on design direction, even if until the end of the work, the design will continue to be refined;
- design studios can help you overcome communication barriers, since sketches will contain universal symbols of lines, circles, squares, and words;
- design studios allow you to share knowledge, for example in teams with different backgrounds and experiences.

With regard to the second point, namely the design of interfaces and control and visual, sound, or tactile access to content, it should be noted that the use of sketch and visualization tools is also a decisive tool for discussion between the people involved in creating and developing the transmedia project, from creators to buyers, to share ideas, customer requirements, timelines and resource availability. Hence, use of sketches for example to

11. Sullivan, B., *The Design Studio Method*, 2016.

display task-flows, site maps, user stories, personas, storyboards and design concepts.



Img. 4.4 Examples of sketches and wireframes for transmedia projects.

In transmedia design reference is made to three basic types of visualization, namely:

- *Sketches*: to think visually to problems and project solutions;
- *Wireframes*: to show how a page or screen might appear to a customer;
- *Prototypes*: to evaluate the simulation of a product or the design in a test environment.

All these tools, increasingly defined and precise as the creative process advances and determines the productive one, become a visual language and a common interpretative key for all the departments involved both in content and experience production and they contribute a lot to both the art direction

and the definition of the language and the aesthetic sense of the project. Authors, producers and designers go from 'what' (universe, story world), passing through 'where' (communication system), 'why' (media sensing and labeling), 'who' (audiences and experiences) and finally 'how' (art direction, design) to communicate a transmedia project.

ART DIRECTION FOR TRANSMEDIA PROJECT

Creating transmedia experiences is an operation linked to sensory mechanisms, social and consumer dynamics, and to editorial and economic strategies but above all to creative and technical variables such as the language and the aesthetic features of the different media involved in a project. As we have seen from the examples presented so far and as it will become even more apparent for those in the next chapters, transmedia is used by the large industry as independent production with two essential purposes: to create imaginative dimensions beyond the traditional and/or to enrich the promotion tools of a brand or franchise. The second case is the simplest and widespread in the industry, the first one with greater potential for experimentation and engagement¹² for the public. Both are based at the same time on artistic and technological content and consumer experiences experienced by the public both inside and outside the story. In this framework, there is a continuous exchange between the passive, active and interactive role of the audience engaged in continuous passages from the *interactivity of consultation*, based on the search for news and insights and on the primacy of personal choice about generalized fruition, *conversational interaction*, founded on the shared participation and experimentation of individual expressive and technological forms. For this reason, transmedia penetrates and influences film writing, TV show running, videogame mechanics and storytelling of virtual and immersive experiences up to the look

12. "Engagement is a type of relationship. It is an active courtship. A continuous wooing and responding. An unrequited coupling". Ref. to: Dowd, T., Fry, M., Niederman, M., Steiff, J., *Storytelling Across Worlds...* cit., p. 30.

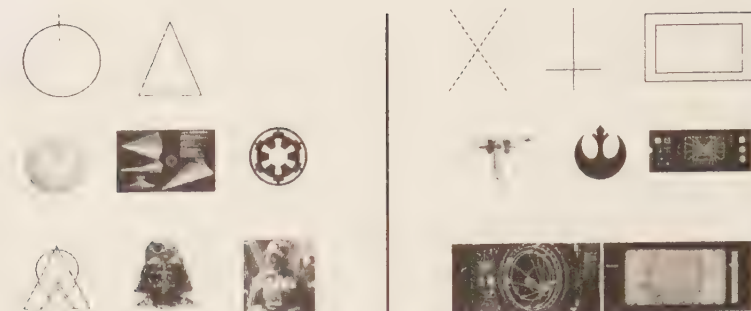
of all the interfaces in sites and applications of the greatest contemporary narrative universes: to enrich them with imagination, engagement, and what I personally call a “positive complexity”. And not only. Relying on *superposition*¹³, a typical element of the shared presence between digital and real world in today’s audiences as stated in the introduction, nowadays transmedia uses design as a sort of linguistic glue between content and platforms. Design reduces the perception of media presence (with the creation of more and more natural, accessible, intuitive interfaces and layouts). It actively contributes to defining the brand identity of a franchise (e.g. in shaping, in choosing the color palette and in the chosen lettering to represent it in the media), moving from its original and primitive form to the most advanced definitions both in content and interfaces and in the morphology of the digital environments in which the stories will be used.



Img. 4.6 Hunger Games: character poster and imagery evolution for the four movies. Design, colors, lettering and composition: from dramatic to epic, from action to dark.

In addition, design defines the form of the communicative system and enhances the key points. It facilitates the sharing

13. Maya Zuckerman writes about *superpositioning*: “This complex idea is derived from a principal of quantum theory, which describes a challenging concept about the nature and behavior of matter and forces at the subatomic level. Simply put, we can be in two places at the same time [...] and we no longer live a linear narrative but now have ongoing experiences simultaneously in the physical and virtual worlds”, Ref. To: Zuckerman, M., *The Collective Journey...* cit.



Img. 4.5 Shaping simulation from Star Wars universe, to visualize the Empire imagery (on the left) and the Rebel Forces (on the right) as they are designed and presented in the movies and in the transmedia contents of the saga.

of content among its authors and all creators (neophytes, professionals or semi-professionals) who spontaneously reinterpret the story in the media, streamlining it and keeping it alive in a consistent and productive way. Lastly, as we will see in the next paragraph, design works effectively as a simplifier of production processes since the design and pre-production phase of a project. But let's start with a personal example, again.

Monitor (2014) is an Italian movie produced by Tea Time Film and distributed by RAI Cinema. The movie tells the story of a modern company (the AMX), effective and performing, which uses a team of supervisors called "monitors", to act as psychologist for its employees. The "monitor" operates behind a wall and communicates through a screen with his "patients", sat in a comfortable room in the closed perimeter of the company. The monitor has to listen and let his patients relax and talk about themselves, without giving solutions to their problems. "Relax without asking for solution" is the method and the magic key for the good worker. But things turn upside down when one of the monitors falls in love with one of his patient and makes all the systems go in pieces.



Fig. 4.7 Monitor (2014). Viral movies and posters produced by the production and the public.

The transmedia project I created for the movie influenced both the script, in order to enrich it with precise atmospheres and details to be used in the communication system, and the secondary subplot of the movie (focused in particular to the brand identity-creation of the AMX). Starting with the design process, I identified the perfect shape for the perfect company in the exagon, the symbol of the beehive and of a perfect, closed and mutual society. The rectangle, instead, was the symbol of the dark side of the company, presented in all the screens in the offices, in the badges of the employees, in the plant of the claustrophobic apartments where the employees lived and in the interfaces of the software management system of the AMX. The hexagon and the rectangle were inserted in all the locations, in the way of interacting between employees, in the opening titles of the movie and in the official materials of the promotional campaign. Rectangles were used for viral videos and artworks produced by the authors and the audience, whilst the hexagons gained their best performance in two motion graphic teaser videos posted on facebook, one week before the movie's release.¹⁴

Ultimately, if the monitor-patient mechanism was easy and straightforward to understand, how to familiarize the audience with AMX's philosophy and internal logic, perhaps even before the story began? Answer: using the design to create fake advertising materials produced by the company itself. For example, by changing language, or by moving the movie's live action to CG Animation, creating a fake app for employees. The perfect company wants to have perfect employees, and therefore creates iAMX, a fitness app on two levels: the first one dedicated to the physical appearance of the employee and the second to

14. Project coordinated for RAI Cinema, Tea Time Film and IED Istituto Europeo di Design with the filmmakers, the sound designers, the CG Artists and the Interaction Designer: Virginia Cantaro, Samuele D'Agostino, Elisa Magnesi, Giacomo Della Grazia, Roman Horokhovatsky, Stefano Critelli, Fabio Laudicina, Giulio Parati, Antonio Pepe, Alessio Vito Vasto, Tommaso Di Martino, Marco Labruna, Cristiano Iellini, Alessandro manzo, Margherita Mondelli, Leonardo Salom, Simone Pietro Usai.

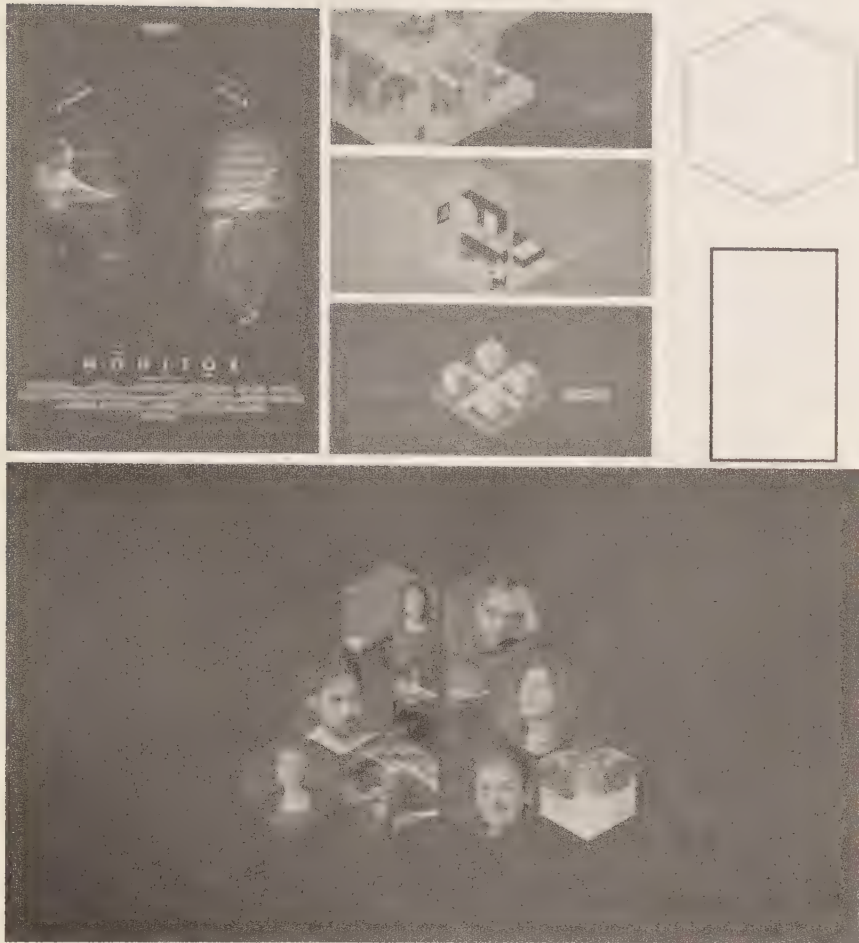


Fig. 4.8 Monitor. Shaping: Hexagon and Rectangle in the official poster, in the opening titles and in the viral teaser of the movie.

the invention of a unique and personal style that can help him working with colleagues and affirming himself in the closed microcosm of the company (always with the aim of making it to the full, of course). The application was obviously included in the screenplay of the film. In the end, a series of avatars in the CG of the movie characters and a series of different banners were created in live action, more dedicated in this case to the company's universe rather than to the characters. All of these

materials were scattered in the communicative system of *Monitor*, paying close attention to constantly combining information and consumption experiences, based on a very precise and intense transmedia roll out.

EXPERIENCE DESIGN AND "AFFINITY SPACES"

After focusing on creating visual identity and designing publishing strategies and content delivery, this is the time to deepen the essential dimensions of the experiences proposed by transmedia narrative universes. To do this, we start from the decisive factors of any form of experience design, namely:

- management of the experiences lived by the public (individual/social, active/passive, etc.);
- space management (real, virtual, etc.);
- time management (linear, asynchronous, etc.);
- action management (interactive, traditional, interoperable, etc.);
- management of the platforms involved (technological, physical, etc.).

Crossing these variables, spreading them in a balanced manner in the different project assets, is always the task of the transmedia designer, which, in order to be successful in the operation, needs first of all certain data on the target (primary/secondary, horizontal/vertical, real/putative etc.), available platforms (technologies/interfaces/tools etc.), budget (economic resources, structures, human resources, purchases) and languages (audio visual, textual, performative, etc.) that can be used in the project.

Even transmedia experiences, such as story worlds and brands, are not made for any narrative universe. They are selective operations that tend to create hierarchies between consumers and often involve different levels of "influence" on the public, from simple access (*threshold*) to an initial involvement



Img. 4.9 Monitor goes CG. iAMX app, viral poster and avatar of the movie.

(*affordance*¹⁵) to the most advanced immersive engagement. Having passed the first “approaching stage” by the audience, finding an effective engagement by the public is based in any case on:

- individual perception and intimate evaluation of the content of the experience;
- sharing experience with other users;
- the active contribution of the user to the experience.

An example? It all begins on the morning of May 18, 2007, when the face of the actor Aaron Eckhart and the slogan “I Believe in Harvey Dent” suddenly appear on hundreds of election posters in ten big American cities. But it couldn’t have been an actual election... In fact, after 48 hours, the posters and brochures are brutally vandalized. At this point, the audience’s attention is captured. The mysterious candidate’s face now has dark circles around his eyes, ugly bruises on the cheekbones and a diabolic sneer. During the night, the word “Too” has been added to the slogan. Batman and Marvel Universe lovers are the first to understand what is happening and start to spread the news on line. For everyone else, a phantom election website is already online (ibelieveinharleydent.com) and the mystery is revealed: Dent has entered the list of candidates for the District Attorney’s Office in Gotham City, and he needs our votes in order to fight organized crime. Before this faux election campaign, rumors of a *Batman Begins* sequel had already started to spread. It would be, however, more than a year after the viral marketing’s initiation until the release of *The Dark Knight* (July, 2008). Another two days pass and another website appears that of the most formidable opponent of Dent and the election posters’ vandal: the Joker.

15. *Affordance* represents the audience’s modality of experiencing the tale through the design of objects, environments and contexts. It is related to player’s agency and intuitive understanding as well as to cultural knowledge and narrative interactions. For a definition, see Norman, D., *The Design of Everyday Things*, 1988.

At this point, the imaginative universe of the tale was totally set. The movie's marketing campaign had just started the longest and best paid alternate reality game (ARG) in the history of film promotion, created by 42 Entertainment and led by Jordan Weisman. Though, in a certain sense it was just the beginning or, if using a specific jargon it is the *rabbit hole* or *trailhead* of the long transmedia campaign lead for the movie's launch in US.

A week later, the Joker's new website (whysoserious.com) urged users to download photos which showed how they vandalized the city or tormented their friends; above all, it urged them to take part in a new crime game "launched" strategically on Halloween night. The goal to be reached is to find, shoot and post online 49 details of 21 US towns. Each detail is linked to a letter, and all the letters create a mysterious phrase. Then, a new photo and a new website go online RorysDeathKiss.com where the Joker ask fan to let themselves be shot in a clown costume in front of some of the most relevant monuments in their town. In November, an online daily newspaper (TheGothamTimes.com) was 'published', followed by the TheHaHaHaTimes.com by the Joker. The newspaper included links to the Portal of the Gotham Police Department (WeAreTheAnswer.org), the bank that would have been held up by the Joker in the trailer (GothamNationalBank.com) and photos of damage to the city incurred during the final pursuit in *Batman Begins* (GothamCityRail.com).

During the following months, the events lead up to a totally unexpected turning point. The death of the actor who played the Joker (Heath Ledger) forced the creators to shift the ARG's narrative focus to Harvey Dent's character, who would have played in fact Two Face in the movie, another one of Batman's archenemies. Several weeks are devoted to the diffusion of fake messages sent by Dent via mobile, requests for online submissions to his electoral campaign and distribution of gadgets all over the city... and everything happened without involving the protagonist of the film (this time his name doesn't

even appear in the title). Meanwhile, the launch of the movie was impending, but there was still time to play one more game. One night in Chicago, the police (the actual ones) stopped a public “Dentmobile” full of the attorney’s noisy fans, while a group called “Clowns against Dent” posts some threatening videos on YouTube. Soon after, Dent announced a live web stream press conference, which was canceled at the last minute because the candidate was somewhere else. An MP3 file later disclosed how in a restaurant (Rossi’sDeli.com), a policeman (FrankNotaro.com) took a woman hostage, asking for the protection of his family and his own life. It was Dent himself who negotiated with the man, first saving the woman, and then assisting in the man’s arrest.

From now on, the marketing of experience gave way to the marketing of the story. The alternate world of Dent was the actual one of Batman. The evil face of the Joker on the Web was the tragic one of the dead actor. Grassroots video of amateur ‘joker’ vandals as well as more collective efforts, like one of a surreal duel on a racetrack between a Toyota F1 and Batmobile, stressed the quests and trials promoted by the viral campaign, which reshaped the urban landscape and brought to mind buildings and skyscrapers of the mythical Gotham; they were also replaced by *beamvertising*, which promoted the movie thanks to brilliant projections on building and monument facades all around the world. Then... stop! The time had come to tell the film’s story. To play the movie. To let the characters talk, and no longer autonomously. Time, first of all, to spotlight the “new” Batman, reaffirming the *anagnorisis* (or *tragic recognition*) and the historical message of this superhero created by Kane and Finger: the *homousia* between Good and Evil, understood as the two inseparable sides of a single matter (which is “doubled” through the comparison Batman/Joker and Batman/Two Face). Life and death, again, with only a thin line in between (in the narrative, too).



Img. 4.10 *The Dark Knight* (2008). The Three Characters of The Alternate Reality Game. Homepage of Harvey Dent's official website, an example of beamvertising and the longest movie icon: The Joker, with its "Why So Serious" torment.

The example of *The Dark Knight* finally shows another editorial characteristic of transmedia: the ability to combine completely different experiences, with the aim of never exhausting the story and, on the contrary, facilitating the passage of the audience from one medium to another without tire or get lost in the communication system of the project.

When I originally pitched the concept [of the ARG for *The Dark Knight Rises*] the concept was basically just a role-playing game played on the world's largest fucking kitchen table [...]. It's just I'm

going to take advantage of the three legs that I kind of based it on which was one, that collaborative storytelling part. Two, what I call “the world is the medium”. Every form of communication should be used to carry parts of the story. And three, that it required a heightened mind to solve because you have to disseminate it, the stories, so widely and fracture it so small.¹⁶ — *Jordan Weisman – co-founder of 42 Entertainment and ARG creator*

But let's go back to the mechanics for a moment and to design transmedia experiences. From the point of view of narrative content, in alternating experience, the media is used in all the possible dramaturgical strategies: scene shots, twist¹⁷, cliffhanger¹⁸, ignition and reunion between characters. From the point of view of the technology platforms used, however, the peculiarities to be valued are: the specific language of each medium, its operational characteristics, the narrative spaces possible for individual and collective consumption, the system of rewards for the public and the times of overlap or division between one platform and the other.

The end is always to talk to multiple audiences of the different assets of a project by leveraging all the “affinity spaces” available. New narratives based on intermediate affinity spaces overcome the limits of traditional stories, in fact, transforming them into real multisensory experiences. They tend to constantly research avantgarde technological universes and narrative experimentation to create them, together with the audience.

The power of transmedia storytelling is to enable us, as audience members to experience our own stories within a fictional world. We can do this on our own, and we can do this together. In both cases, we have the opportunity to engage within a world and feel that our

16. Dowd, T., Fry, M., Niederman, M., Steiff, J., *Storytelling Across Worlds...* cit., p. 196.

17. The twist is a sudden turning point in characters' lives or in the plot, capable of revolutionizing all the narration.

18. “The cliffhanger refers to the idea of posing a question or putting a main character in jeopardy right at the end of an episode. Audience return for the next episode to what happens – how the character gets out of the threat or problem presented”. Ref. To: Dowd, T., Fry, M., Niederman, M., Steiff, J., *Storytelling Across Worlds ...* cit., p. 115.

participation has an impact on the events within the overarching narrative. It's more than just getting more interactively involved with a narrative, it's about getting immersed in a fictional world and feeling like you have agency within that world, that what you do matters and has an impact on the related story you experiences as you travel across and between media to participate more fully in the story. — *Drew Davidson – director of the Entertainment Technology Center at Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh*

Considering the creation of imaginative universes, the most effective “affinity spaces” for transmedia projects are, basically: *moving experiences*, *choice excitement*, *immersive consumption* (on virtual, augmented and mixed reality) and *story-based participative experiences* crossing media platforms and immersive storytelling technologies.

MOVING EXPERIENCES

One of the most decisive requirements of the transmedia universes is *motion*, meant both as the fluidity of digital spaces and the simultaneous presence of different wandering users (connected, for example, through physical movement or that simulated via mobile, tablet, GPS, console, controller... etc. or isolated). Considering the creation of a narrative scheme, particularly in transmedia universes, these are the most important features:

- the comfortableness of the tale (in terms of accessibility, portability, interactions);
- the explicit visualization of main phases of the tale;
- the presence of an alternance between moving and static experiences;
- deeper narrative dimensions, based on perception rather than on imagination.

A “personal” example in this case is the novel *The Secret Message of the Falling Stars*¹⁹, published in 2012. The story is that of a sixteen-year-old orphaned Roman writer who forces his high

school professor to go with him to Ireland hunting for his parents. Once in place, however, the two will remain entangled in the drug traffic of a small North Island fisherman's village until they meet the enigmatic guardian of a lighthouse that has for years kept a mysterious secret.

A Three-voices story (boy, teacher, and woman) with primary target consisting of teen/students and secondary target represented by travellers and female audience, the transmedia project of *The Secret Message* began with a short film (*The sea in my veins*) that one year before the release of the book told the first part of the story (50 pages, with an alternative ending) and was presented in the "Young" section of the Cairo Mediterranean Literary Festival during the "Arab Spring" in 2011. First fragment of the story and point of entry of his narrative universe, the "short" was accomplished with the contribution of the same students of the Roman schools described in the novel. Two months after the publication, the "mobile" assets of the project began: a post-it campaign with the spread of stickers inside stations, big meeting points and Irish pubs of the Capital; a *meme and demotivational*²⁰ campaign of film inspiration via Facebook and, after the release, a mini tour of music reading and performance organized in collaboration with Irish singer Kay McCarthy, to accompany the first readers with the original soundtrack present with some pieces even in the novel's text.

One month after the release, however, was the turn of an urban interactive book game, a team-building treasure hunt set in the six Roman sites of the story, rehearsed by the audience by interpreting messages and digital content distributed in the street (video and texts, downloadable through QR code) realized in partnership with the Urban Experience association. Two

19. Giovagnoli, M., *The secret message of falling stars*, 2012.

20. Meme and *demotivational* are expressive forms of social networks and Web 2.0. They consist of images, texts, cartoons and artwork shared and personalized by users through online word-of-mouth and can be based on current themes and paradoxical content (demotivational) or artistic improvisations and contagious textures and characters typical of fan culture (meme).

CHOICE EXCITEMENT

Among the most crucial functions of an interactive tale, the increase of attention and enhancement of the decisive power of the audience are the basic dimensions in transmedia narratives. In particular, in tales based on *choice excitement*, there is not only a different narrative choice corresponding to each of the user's choices (as for example, in the role playing games, gamebooks or video games), but the results of those choices prove more or less significant, because they are more or less effective in having a direct influence on all the basic elements of the story. For this reason, choice excitement is a way to manage the tale that requires simplified and universal platforms, servers and high-quality graphic tools, able to ensure effective, gratifying and impressive experiences to authors, participants and the audience. Finally, considering the dramaturgic point of view, in stories which put "everything at stake" on the choice excitement of different audiences of media involved in a tale, the following are fundamental:

- effective choice-autonomy;
- a seemingly provisional aspect of the general pattern of the tale, which has to be linked to an actual flexibility of the main narrative sequence in the imaginative universe;
- the audiences' direct and unanimous experience of trials faced by characters, and basic stages of the story.

From the point of view of the choice of technology platforms, choice excitement requires, above all, simple interfaces and technologies that can provide effective, rewarding experiences to authors, participants and audiences (even in limited numbers and elite modes). An example?

Presented in preview at the New York Comicon 2016 and made by Lionsgate and Starbreeze Studios, *John Wick Chronicle VR* allows the user to play firsthand virtually, with four months in

advance on the movie release, some sequences of *John Wick. Chapter 2*. The game authorizes the player to “rewrite” parts of the story in his own way, embodying the hero of the film but carrying it out to perform operations other than those visible in the room, according to his choices within a puzzle game/action game. Gaming experiences range from exploring some of the locations to rebuilding movie situations and participating in tightly-focused John Wick style firefighting. In this way, the storyline of the original story and the main asset of the communicative system is interpreted by the public and substantially changes the future fruition of the film, triggering a continuous and gratifying passage between the choices suggested by the tale and those made by the user in the challenge with himself and against other players²², even sharable online via social network.

IMMERSIVE CONSUMPTION

Aristotle writes, in Chapter VI of *Poetics*, regarding the tragic nature of a story, that it is just the “imitation of an action”. If applied to transmedia narratives, this axiom is most effective within universes of the tale based on immersive environments, where “to live” is the same as creating a tale by using dynamic technologies like walled gardens, augmented reality platforms and tools, devices and consoles provided with movement sensors able to react to vector forces and orientation in the space. Immersive environments do not respond to the same storytelling and fruition rules of the traditional tale but often create their own, otherwise interactive and compelling for the public. High quotient narratives, featuring on a dramaturgic level:

- a space that is an active part of the narrative and can simply be consumed by the audience;
- plots or stories directly organized by the action/reaction of the audience either with the story

22. McGonigal, J., *Reality is broken ... cit.*, pp. 167-174.



Img. 4.12 John Wick Chronicles VR (2017). One of the initial scenes of the movie becomes virtual reality with HTC Vive.

environment or in the space where the experience is performed;

- the disruption or re-creation of dimensional couples typical of space interpretation: open/closed, actual/virtual, natural/fictional are continuously altered through the audience's consumption.

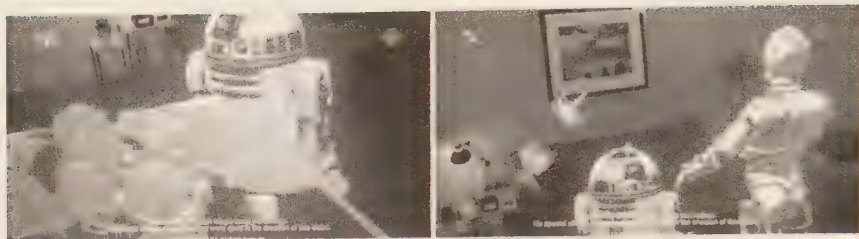
The result is a *Reality-Virtuality Continuum* in which “the normal passive user becomes the main actor, immerses and interacts with the hallucinated alternative reality, building himself a plot and a narration each time”. From this point of view: increased reality, virtual reality, immersive experiences and mixed reality offer different²³ sensory experiences, but all can contribute

greatly to transmedia universes from different points of view, in particular:

- to reduce (until cancelling) the distance between content and medium of fruition;
- to embody the experience of immersion in the story even on multiple platforms;
- to experience (both as a public and as authors) sensory experiences and new forms of “presence within the media” of the communicative system.

Two examples? In San Francisco, in the underground of the headquarters of Lucas Film, there is a transmedia laboratory that is today an excellence in creating immersive experiences: the ILM X-Media LAB created by Industrial Light & Magic, Skywalker Sound and Lucasfilm, franchises that run on several Studios and in particular on *Star Wars* to develop story experiences to be used in film promotion and in games and theme parks. In 2016, “The Cave”, as it is called by the insiders, has started a collaboration with Magic Leap for creating mixed reality experiences in order to interact immersively with real world and virtual worlds. The first content was *Lost Droids*, which carried the horses of the two C3-PO and R2-D2 droids in the apartment’s room taken with the theft of Black Death plans. The village spoken by the two drones during the shooting materializes in real time on a desk, while the Imperial spaceships and Rebel Alliance X-Wings follow the Millennium Falcon between the armchairs, cabinets, and carpets of the room. This is the first experiment of mixed reality in film promotion, though the content was only indirectly tied to the launch of *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* as part of the competitive communicative system designed to launch the film. But above all, it was a new way to materialize the presence of the saga in the bedrooms of its new million fans. More than 40 year old locomotives and ornaments!

23. Contini, C., Mori, A., *Augmented Advertising*, in: *Communication Strategies Lab, Enhanced Realities*, 2012, pp. 213.



Img. 4.13 Lost Droids, a mixed-reality experiment indirectly tied to the transmedia launch campaign of *Rough One: A Star Wars Story* (2016).



Img. 4.14 ILM X-Media Lab: Visuals.

Example number two, from anywhere else in the world and in a completely different context: in Macau, China, in 2009, *Dragon's Treasure* was created, an entertaining entertainment experiment embedded in the transmedia launch of City of Dreams Casino,

where it was realized a permanent installation within a gigantic movie dome.



Img. 4.15 Dragon's Treasure and immersive cinema in Macau. The dome's show.

Dragon's Treasure tells the story of the mysterious marine dragon that, according to legend, lives under the city and the public can live its history moving within space as under a great heavenly sky thanks to an experience of images and sounds but also smoke, mechanical effects, light games, performance and essences released into the air. Created by Falcon's Treehouse, the show has attracted more than a million viewers in a very short communication campaign only in the first year of the "Bubble Theater" activity. Consumption experience is so complex that every single vision of the show allows the spectator to experience different experiences depending on his position in the room, the movement in space and the interaction with the contents, thanks to smoke machines, semi-travel lanterns, 57 different audio zones and more than 1000 led-lights to enrich the story's use, in the sky and under the sea.

Both examples now reveal the complexity of storytelling required for their creation and updating, both in individual experiments and in permanent installations. Analyzing the tale, for example, it is easy to see that, in terms of rhyme, the narrative within virtual worlds and increased reality is very different and depends on experience rather than information flow or emotional unleashed-ness. Such diversity, however, is not a

danger or less than a 'killer application' for transmedia storytelling. Transmedia is always the narrative universe, the story world, the communicative system. Virtual can be an asset, a content or a set of experiences to live within a transmedia project, and not vice versa. Immersivity should be considered a "fifth dimension" for transmedia storytelling that, as Alison Norrington (creator of Storyworld Conference, the place where many of the transmedia techniques were born) states, it asks authors to "write in circles" from the very beginning of their work.

Another case is where the story itself focuses on itself: technology, forms of fruition, and interfaces included, both in increased reality and in virtual worlds or immersive experiences. In fact, in this case, in terms of storytelling:

- narrative forms tend to be simplified to make consumer experience more immediate;
- the story forms contain specific clues and centers of attention, so as to anchor (in video or audio) public attention on one or more media;
- the forms of narrative point to a *positive fail through*, to stimulate the public or the user to progress in the story even in the face of temporary problems or difficulties;
- the forms of narrative use a different sense of rhythm and time, often determined by the operations to be performed and therefore potentially infinite or, on the contrary, rigidly contingent;
- the story forms do not dilate the effects of the actions over time but they always link them directly to their consequences, triggering cause-and-effect mechanisms that derive from game design and focus on public engagement rather than emotional engagement.
- the story forms contain continuous *call to action* and

quest to transform the tale from character-driven into plot-driven;

- the characters and their deepening are sacrificed to the centrality of the user and to his interactions with the environments and with the other spectators;
- narrative forms use technology as a form of language and storytelling simultaneously (with interactive tutorial, kinematic, tool's test, statistics or the like);
- the forms of narrative give the audience a fundamental role and sound design takes on different forms depending on the link between the experience and the other contents of the project (for example, replacing sound effects with traditional soundtracks, or viceversa);
- the forms of storyline complement their own experience design with those of all the other contents of the transmedia project.

To make some examples in digital worlds, let us also use *Star Wars* and ILM-X-Media Lab for two special projects, one serial and one shot: *Jakku Spy* and *Trials on Tatooine*.

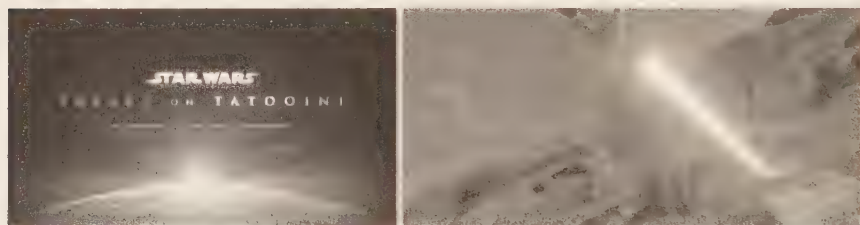
Linked to the transmedia launch of *Star Wars. The Force Awakens* (2015), *Jakku Spy* is a google cardboard experience in multiple episodes in which the user searches for the BB-8 robot, the icon of the film, by means of a 360-degree scan on the Jakku planet to overcome trials, traps, and tricks by making decisive choices within a predetermined time limit. The relationship with the film was explorative and promotional and the game was part of the supportive communication system of the movie. The simple mechanism of call to mission and enigmatic solution merged with the simplicity of technology, based on the visual element and interactivity of consultation rather than participation.

Absolutely the opposite is the case of the other virtual experience created for the same film: *Trials on Tatooine*, where the user was



Img. 4.16 Jakku Spy (2015). Official layouts and screenshot (Lucasfilm).

hired instead through a viewer (HTC Vive) and involved in a cinematic virtual reality experiment. The plot was also simple in this case and it was all about involving the user. Mission: to repair the Millennium Falcon that was left behind during a landing on the planet, and at the same time defend yourself against an assault of imperial troops (two goals structure). To solve the first test, the old C3-PO was soon to be rescued, while in the second case it was necessary to mount a light saber and actually fight virtual Jedi Knight. What to ask more about life?



Img. 4.17 Trials on Tatooine (2015). Official Layouts (Lucasfilm).

STORY-BASED PARTICIPATIVE EXPERIENCES

Transmedia storytelling it is always collaborative rather than exclusive, choral rather than individual, heterogeneous rather than orderly. Participative transmedia experiences use contents created by single individuals who set their tales within larger narrative frames taken from literature, entertainment, cinema, videogames, television, advertising, comics and the Web. Their aim is to involve the audience and enhance the value of their contributions after the release of a transmedia product or work.

The most important narrative requirement of a story is sharing, as devised by both authors and corporations within “protected” environments and, usually, in a non profit scheme. From a historical-chronological point of view, massive and participative narratives represent one of the oldest forms of transmedia experiences and their history has close to half a century of tales. There are two fundamental limits to participative and massive narratives: not being able to effect the narrative, and the élitist nature of the construction of plots and characters. A story-based participative experience is untouchable once distributed (all you can do is carry it on or add to it with another narrative); this fundamental condition makes participative experiences an excellent instrument for those transmedia projects based on supportive communication systems, while making it a weapon in competitive ones. Moreover we can identify some common features of all *participative transmedia experiences*:

- the experimental nature of the tales, always presented as innovative and revolutionary projects;
- the use of rewards and short term deadlines to reach the most efficient outcome;
- the use of editorial systems based on at least one canonical medium (generally the Web).
- the presence, within author groups, of solid friendships, even for a short time;
- the linguistic/artistic merging experienced crossing texts with visuals, animations, installations, static/dynamic platforms and contents (from fanfiction in entertainment to nanopublishing and citizen-journalism in communication, from adbusting and subvertising, from pixel art to digital poetry etc.);
- the presence of informal tutoring, constantly occurring between aficionados and newcomers in the narrative stream and experience²⁴ in the communicative system.

24. Another type of collaborative narratives for “imaginative communities” [Anderson, B.,

For example, from my personal works again: with over 500,000 copies sold in 40 countries, *Fallen's* saga by Lauren Kate is a planetary phenomenon that in 2017 came to the movies after being self-interpreted by her fandom in TV series, artwork, fanfiction, theatrical performances and numerous other forms adaptation and free interpretation. The story is that of Luce, a tormented American student split between Daniel and Cam, an angel and a demon who every seventeen years return to her life condemning her to a deadly kiss that is repeated for centuries. At the launch of the film, I coordinated a group of designers/fans who created parallel promotion materials for the Web and social networks by reinterpreting in agreement with the Italian distributor and participating in *Fallen* imaginary. By studying the "tastes" and fans' habits, and by launching their messages and requests for suggestions and suggestions, artworks, a viral videoclip, teaser in CG animation and still images were shared with the public without citing the cast and story of movies, published on social networks along with an online test (via Facebook) aimed at identifying one of the protagonists of the tale. Precise timing (movie outing), mentoring, language hybridization, and continuous consultation with fandom have made the creation of *Fallen Italia* (this is the name of the project), which soon became a local and curious success, which has

Comunità immaginate. Origine e diffusione dei nazionalismi, 1996] are the *synergistics*, which: involve the creation by authors who do not know each other, of specific portions and stages of a comprehensive narrative / allow authors to mutually alter their own creations / are not necessarily connected to pre-existing genres / alternatively use professional or amateur authors, never mixing them with each other. What comes out of all those indicators is that participative narratives represent the most widespread narrative prototype in "narrative marketing" and in the promotion and launch of projects and narratives, while the synergistic are more effective in the planning phase of artistic and interactive narratives. From the author's' point of view, then, participative narratives are more often used in massive editorial experiences and projects and tend to expand the narrative; those collaborative and synergistic, on the contrary, are more suitable to exclusive projects and experiences and tend to a timely closing of the narration. Ref. to: M. Giovagnoli, *Transmedia Storytelling*, 2011 and for the definition of synergistic storytelling see: Askwith, L., http://dir.salon.com/story/tech/feature/2003/05/12/mat-rix_universe/index.html.

flanked for weeks the official promotion of the film in collaboration with the Italian distributor M2 Pictures.²⁵



Img. 4.18 *Fallen* (2017). Video and Artwork of the *Fallen* Italia project.

Second example, that of a serial project launched again in the *Star Wars* saga, and in particular the first movie spin-off *Rogue One – A Star Wars Story* (2016). *Go Rogue* is a 4 episodes story-based experience of about two and a half minutes, comically telling the story of the recovery of the plans of the Black Death faced in the film, with the words: “A team of rebel super-fans have created an original toy-sized adventure celebrating *Rogue-One*”. The protagonists are official action figures and toys of *Star Wars* with licensed brands such as Lego, Funko and Hasbro, animated in stop motion and with irreverent and fan-based jokes. The

25. Project coordinated for M2Pictures Italy, Rizzoli and IED Istituto Europeo di Design of Rome with the filmmakers, the sound designers and the CG Artists: Noemi Adamo, Alexia Belviso, Giuseppe Reda, Matteo Rizzo, Andrea Alessi, Giorgio Filippini.

series is the result of a \$ 7,000 prize contest and the transmedia project lasted 4 months, from the launch of the first episode (August) to the release of the film (December). The strength of the narrative lies in its originality and interactivity, whether it is a live action or a toy reconstruction acting in a complex 3D set or in an improvised location in stop motion.



Img. 4.19 Go Rogue (2016) Layouts and screenshot from the series.

What we have just outlined is a well articulated but temporary picture of the most technologically and dramatically advanced experiences applied to the transmedia, as I am writing this work. But others will come, more and more refined and complex and engaging. For this reason, it is the task of the producer, the storyteller and the transmedia designer to continue to look for new expressive ways to engage with the public throughout their career, as well as keep up-to-date on the most curious and important cases created not only for entertainment but more generally from the world of communication and information, industry, or independent production around the world. Hence the reason for the next chapter of the book, and the next stage of our journey.

WORKSHOP 4 – EXPERIENCE DESIGN

Get started from the story and the documents you've gathered up to this point and see the possibility of generating in your story world experiences of effective consumption both in terms of perception and imagination. Proceed and then optimize by means of media sensing and labeling the *emotional reach* of history and its communicative system, providing expressive and performative spaces to the audience of the various project assets. Established and distributed the *emotional repertoire* of the tale, check the target choice, that of the platforms and languages initially identified for the communicative system. Measure and "push" the level of engagement offered to the audience and identify "real-world experiences, choice excitement, immersive universes, story-based entertainment experiences" that are useful to explode the story so enthralling both in real-world and digital environments. Keep all the materials you have made, finally, in view of the work to be done at the end of reading the Appendix of the book.

CHAPTER 5

TRANSMEDIA FOR BRANDS, INSTITUTIONS AND ARTS

Not all the stories can be translated into transmedia storytelling projects, and neither all the brand can. First of all because they share the need of complex story worlds to refer to: not all the stories a brand can potentially tell can correctly be developed and spread on different media in an articulated way. Moreover, since transmedia properties are expansive narrative engines built to deliver almost unlimited stories across multiple media platforms, such richness and complexity can be too wide an objective for a company's communication strategy. Transmedia brands endure through the maintenance of a one-to-one relationship between the brand and the individual consumer, and the "one consumer" needs participation, synergism, mid-term conversation. The one consumer represents millions of consumers who do not speak the same language but can meet together for some time in different media simultaneously thanks to transmedia universes and experience. This brings us back to all the observations in terms of design and editing, technique and management, and, last but not least budget, which we have dealt with in the previous chapters. All these conditions contribute into the creation of the true, tangible difference between the marketing mix used to tell a brand/product, and transmedia used to embody and 'become' the brand/product itself. In order to clearly and stately define

such a boundary it shall be useful to get back to a couple of examples we have used in the previous chapters.

2016. Early in the morning. Mysterious packages popped up around Toronto. “The anti-static bags bore a #ANewSocietyRises writing and a picture of the black and white mask fans of the TV show *Mr. Robot* recognized as the symbol of the show’s fictive ‘fSociety’ hacker collective. Inside the bags: a real \$50 bill decorated with the same fSociety mask. Discovered by consumers who’d been following a set of clues online and in OOH (*out-of-home*) ads, the packages were the pot of gold at the end of a branded scavenger hunt created by Shomi to promote the launch of *Mr. Robot* on the streaming service. Crafted by Rethink, the campaign took its inspiration from *Mr. Robot*’s themes, such as hacking and re-distributing wealth. The agency ‘hacked’ its OOH ads half-way through the campaign with stickers promoting region-specific hashtags. Consumers who searched for the hashtags online discovered an Instagram account where a hooded figure – another piece of imagery borrowed from the show – was pictured hiding packages around Toronto and Vancouver. The campaign’s TV spots, by Corus Entertainment, also followed the hacking theme. One of the 30-second spots appeared to be a simple re-run of a previous Shomi brand spot, then a few seconds in the ad was “hacked” by *Mr. Robot* and turned into a spot promoting the show”.¹

Example two. Five years before. The above mentioned TV show *Glee* partners with Chevrolet in an online/real world game. During the series’ second season launch, the car brand is present on the red carpet alongside the actors. A presence that can be felt as intrusive since the brand can’t justify its role in the narration. But this is not a case of product placement or sponsorship. For the music video filmed with *Glee* for the Superbowl 2011, in fact, the brand integrates the shooting of the commercial into the

1. Russ, M., *How Shomi “Hacked” its own Mr. Robot Campaign*, accessed november 4, 2016, marketingmag.ca.



Img. 5.1 Mr. Robot on Shomi (2016). Urban artworks and TV-digital campaign.

story of the series, and the online presence of the two brands continues in a joint way furtherly on artworks and ads.

Moving from the role of authors and brands to that of the public of transmedia and looking for the most useful definitions referring to today's "participative consumers" it is relevant to mention Robert V. Kozinetz's *E-Tribalized Marketing*, who divides them – according to their active involvement and to their proactiveness – into the following categories: *tourists*, *minglers*, *insiders* and *devotees* (from the least involved users to those most involved in the communication and in the brand content)². Consumers who – in the 'cross media' – co-operate within the range of complex story worlds, so that – if we compare those processes with traditional advertising and customer relationship management – the success of the promotional action shall be evaluated not only in terms of customer loyalty and approval rating, but also according to proactiveness and active engagement.

Lately we have been experimenting and producing location based storytelling, embedding narratives into the locations that people are in and reaching them with these video-based narratives through their smartphones. I think this is an aspect where brands can utilize transmedia storytelling effectively, to strengthen their positions as

2. Kozinetz, R.V., *E-Tribalized Marketing. The Strategic Implications of Virtual Communities of Consumption*, in *European Management Journal*, 1999, pp. 252-264.

parts of people's everyday life. AR, location based, VR... the technological methods are many, but at the core lies – as always – the stories and the experiences the audience, the customer, takes part of. The most successful and effective way of crafting such stories and such experiences is via the use of transmedia storytelling methods. Building the story world and the narratives and the arcs and the characters, deciding and focusing on platforms and engagement methods and making sure all parts fit together logically and naturally, thus heightening the overall experience. Only then can successful integration into all parts of people's everyday life become reality. — *Simon Staffans – transmedia Producer and CEO of ReThink NMS*

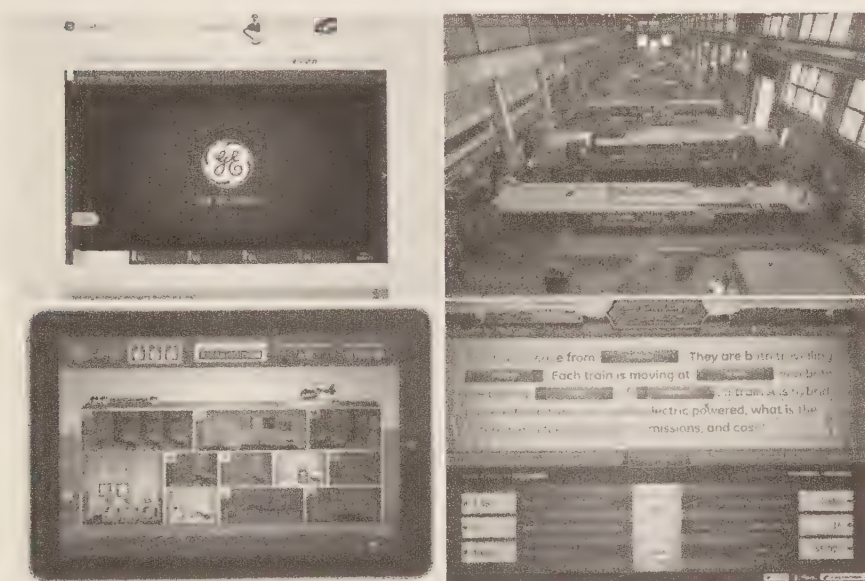
The relationship traditionally existing between brand and consumer's *emotional repertoire* identified by the “rhetoric of lovemarks”³ in transmedia transforms the brand into a whole made of more narrative story worlds and the consumer into an experimenter, a tutor, a player, a supporter, and much more. Also, the constant and increasingly frequent shift from ‘me’ to ‘you’ and vice versa we are witnessing in interactive fruition of stories and brands is leading to a strengthening of the power of the narrative, if compared to that of the desire of possessing a given object or good. As Barry Stamos, CEO and founder of Videoo has it: “Consumers are now asking publishers to bring them not just the facts but the social story. Show me what others, like me, have to say, how they feel and what they’re doing about an issue. This is social video transcending “my” story and “my” view and transitioning to ‘our’ story and ‘our’ view”⁴. When applying this concept to a brand it grows enormously its importance as the very idea of ownership in contemporary audience has in the meanwhile changed and – as Simon Staffan writes, “We’re looking at generations of people NOT looking to

3. The “rhetoric of lovemarks” as it was termed in 2004 by Kevin Roberts, defines the fundamental relationship existing between the brand and the consumer's *emotional archive*, a crucial element for the consumer to be able to interact with all the media involved in a transmedia communicative system. Ref. to: Roberts, K., *Lovemarks: The Future Beyond Brand*, 2004.

4. Stamos, B., *5 rules for adapting your company to the age of group-storytelling*, accessed may 3, 2016, in: venturebeat.com

own a new car or a fancy apartment [...] but instead looking to have experiences to enrich their lives. As storytellers, that's exactly what we should be providing with – access to experiences on different scales, with different demands, different possibilities to dive in and engage, different communities, different niches"⁵. An example?

In 2012 NY agency Barbarian Group creates *GE Show* for American Electricity giant General Electrics, eager to develop a more friendly, ordinary and close to the public image of its brand. *GE Show* is an online multimedia container which has – over time – collected and hosted documentaries, games and apps which were to show the public all the activities of the business group, from motor to services to companies and hospitals, from aeronautics to renewable energy: the result was 300 million contacts in less than one year.



Img. 5.2 General Electrics – *GE Show* (2012). The show's website, the documentaries, the game apps for iPad and the online videogame.

5. Staffans, S., *One year...* cit., p. 25.

The project was intended to create and diffuse a different idea of the corporation also by showing a parallel universe to those official media would present, broadly targeted in terms of age of the audience and much closer to the public. GE Show was meant to quickly go beyond its objective and give the company a great opportunity of brand activation to its potential future public: young families, influencers, young people into new media.

It was thanks to a supportive system that GE has exploited a crucial feature typical of transmedia: the creation of real experiences where, as it is with mosaic, all the different parts build on each other offers a total overview that is greater than the sum of its components.

DEODORIZING AND MERGING

Not all brands or institutions possess the necessary narrative and technological characteristics to effectively use transmedia. Also, because of its high visibility, transmedia may even appear to be somewhat cumbersome, out of context or invasive to the product or the service to be promoted or re-imagined. As I have stated above, transmedia is not for simply promoting, but to become part of a product.

As transmedia producer Jeff Gomez has it: “instead of advertising your product by cutting into bits and pushing it out to your potential audience, it is far better to recontextualize those bits or even create new bits that start familiarizing the audience with the characters, the back-story, and the larger story world”. Such a consideration was confirmed by Jeff’s transmedia contribution to the transmedia campaign for *Coke Happiness Factory* (2008), a contest that aimed to create an animated brand movie with the active contribution of the users on an interactive site. In the project, in fact, you had to choose a character from those presented in an introductory trailer, then register in a virtual job center and you soon started to work in the “Coke Factory”. At the end of the competition, through the contribution of all the participants, an ad of the initiative was realized. The

appropriation of the narrative and the participation in the creation of the story were the users' task, but, at the same time, they were guided and helped to set the tale by the authors of the campaign who created an innovative narrative process that was protected by the brand.

All we had to start with was the commercial. We were asked to build an entire fictional universe around it with a rich history, dozens of characters and wild adventures yet to come. Our first task was to immerse ourselves in the brand. Coke is a part of Americana, with its own archetype and mythos. We needed to make certain that was reflected in all aspects of the narrative. As with most of our clients, our first major milestone for Coke was a franchise mythology. This is a visually impressive guide to the people, places, history and devices of the fictional universe. We get into the cultures and mysticism, messages and themes, everything you need to know to produce dozens, even hundreds, of hours of content from this world. We also produced a transmedia roll out 'blueprint', strategizing how Happiness Factory can play across comic books, videogames, outdoor interactive ads and other media across the globe over the course of the next several years.⁶ — *Jeff Gomez – transmedia Producer and founder Starlight Runner Entertainment*

Eventually, brand, form and content of a transmedia communication system of a product, they all need to shape their content according to the various market contexts where it operates. Such a process is called *deodorizing*, it was applied in the examples above mentioned and is aimed at avoiding issues of cultural compatibility in specific community actions (such as those dealt with regarding *genius loci*) carried out in territories or times different from the original ones. Transmedia deodorizing of a brand is a revision process which may be applied at different degrees of intensity, through three essential operations:

- *camouflaging* or *censoring* of elements too 'local' or which might hurt other markets' sensitivity (religious, political, cultural, etc...);

6. <http://www.starlightrunner.com>



Img. 5.3 Coke – Happiness Factory (2008). New Character and a new, bizarre story world for the brand campaign, realized by Starlight Runner Entertainment.

- *combination* of different cultural traditions or the *temporary transfer* of the brand to alternative universes which get integrated in terms of plot, characters and location, describing the brand through a merging of different languages;
- a *new reading* or the *explicit violation* of the brand, aimed

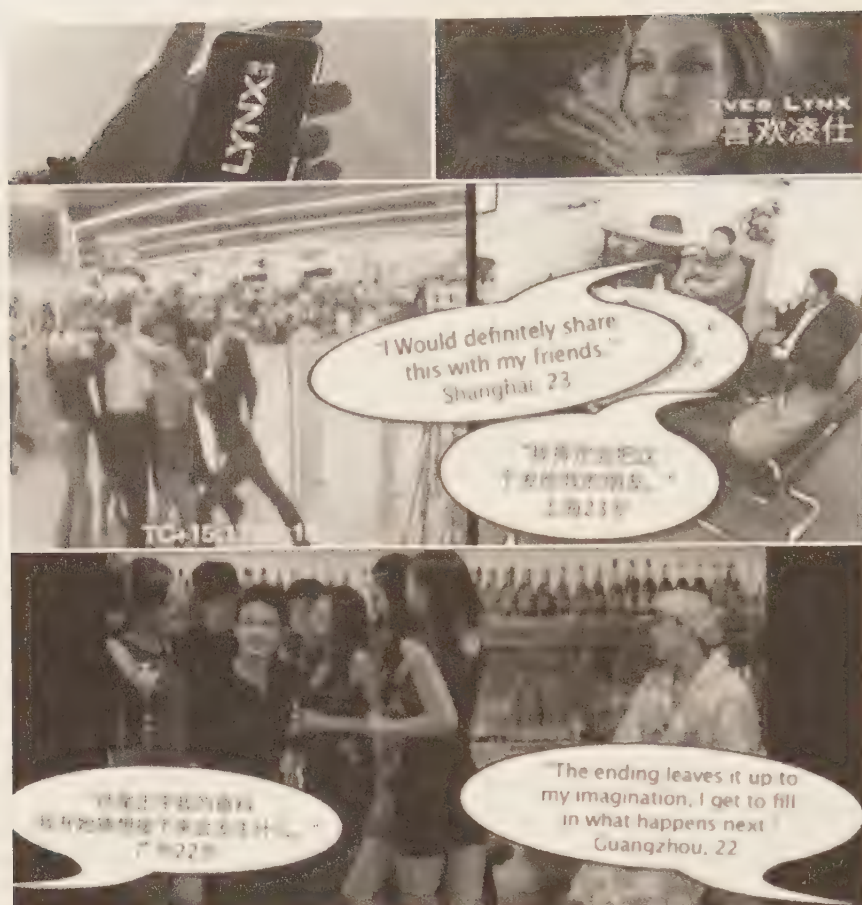
at producing a 'surprise effect' in its positioning on the market.

Among the different activities, the last two are without a doubt the most used by transmedia applied to institutional and brand communication and promotion. Let us now give two examples to better highlight them.

First, the English-German brand Linx. It produces deodorants and has a very young target. Linx created a curious transmedia project at its debut on the Chinese market in 2011. After having identified with accuracy the primary target of the communicative action (male, twentysomething, eager to please and seduce, college education, digital media fan spending more than 30 hours per week on them), the project was structured in three steps:

- the creation of expectations through viral videos showing kinky situations positively finalized thanks to the use of the deodorant and presenting a live commentary by a fake focus group; it was an explicit *merging* of western television imagery (for example by quoting English TV series *Skins*) and movie imagery (with guests such as the US actress Angelina Jolie);
- the announcement of the launch, made with alluring posters and videos placed on skyscrapers facades evoking the seducing power of the product;
- the education of the new public, seduced by the messages of the campaign, focused on national pride (success vs failure) and on the individual dimension of consumption (sexy consumer vs loser).

Second example. Between 2001 and 2007 German car brand BMW created a transmedia project called *The Hire*, whose rabbit hole was a series of eight 'provocative' short movies sent online in two different seasons on BMW official channel (bmwfilm.com). The objective of the project was to refresh in a



Img. 5.4 Linx (2012). Apps, video with movie merging, reality show with fake focus group and comparative spots with consumer (irresistible) and non consumer (loser).

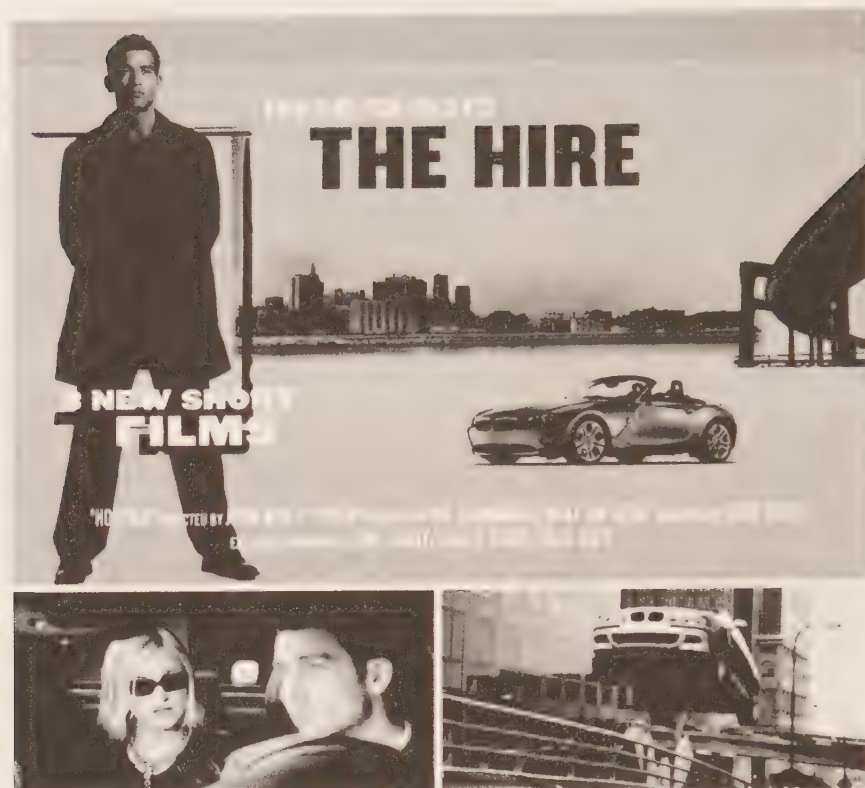
sporty and fashion light the brand's image on the international market. The short movies aimed at the same time at cinematic merging, with the use of contaminations between crime and action genres and the presence of various showbiz stars, and with an extravagant and ironic transfiguration of the brand's traditional image based on reliability and comfort.

The short movie *Star*, for example, was directed by Guy Ritchie and starred by popstar Madonna and actor Clive Owen. It told

the story of the temporary kidnapping of the popstar by a fearless driver who would joyride her on an aggressive M5 and then he would literally kicked out of the car in front of the paparazzi waiting for her in front of the main entrance of her concert venue.

The transmedial universe of *The Hire* was completed by four subplot films where BMW imagery was in part traced back to the brand's traditional image and by an alternate reality game where, through links on different websites such as Apple, Starbucks and others, a call action was launched. By using clues from the short movies this action would bring the users to find phone numbers and solve an enigma in order to win the Z4 object of the campaign. The 250 finalists of the game were then 'mysteriously' contacted via mobile phone where a voice message would invite them to meet in Las Vegas at a vip party where the prize would be given to the only winner of the competition with a very exclusive ceremony. This final action of the project would grant the brand a sporty and elitary image at once, one elegant and mundane, reliable and unexpected. Eventually, in 2004 the comics series *The Hire* and a series of audiobooks to be listened to in the car while driving were added to the products above described. The result was a hundred million views for the videos, one million DVDs sold and 17% global sales growth of the two models involved in the project.

Speaking the language of the different transmedia communities involved in an editorial project is an action which has to be carried out mostly by its addressees so that it shall become from the very beginning an important amalgam and the best pidgin for sharing the narrative. This is why, although swimming in the waters of advertising, synthesis, shortness and simplicity are neither the only nor the best solution possible in transmedia project applied to brands and institutions. Also in this case, imaginative universe, story world and design play a crucial role, one inalienable, one which prefers complexity over simplicity, engagement to passive and general consumption.



Img. 5.5 BMW – 'The Hire' (2006). Deodorizing and merging of the brand through the project. Poster and two screenshots of the short movie *Star* directed by Guy Ritchie.

BRAND STORIES

Let's go back for a while on the role of experiences in transmedia storytelling. In marketing and advertising campaigns, in fact, the main features of a transmedia brand can be turned into narrative matter for participative authors who, on their own initiative, decide to manipulate those contents in order to make them personal, or create new narratives independent from the original. As Anne Zeiser reports in her book *Transmedia Marketing*: "When a brand touches audiences, it activates the senses. How it looks, how it sounds, how it feels, even how it smells are part of its identity. [...] The visual identity of a brand is

created through consistent use of visual elements such as fonts, colors, and graphics that are specific to a brand”⁷. Design and storytelling, again. Transmedia for brands needs to be memorable, timeless, versatile and appropriate. And in telling the story of a brand, an institution, a product or service with transmedia communicative systems, brand stories mainly enhance the value of:

- a product’s name, its brand image and its brand identity, that is the universe of reference created by the company;
- a brand’s overall image and knowledge, including ideas, attractiveness and its consumers’ “historical” expectations;
- brand value, that is the brand’s value and reputation in its own market segment;

The added value given to transmedia projects by the use of brand story can be measured in terms of:

- *brand experience*, either in terms of engagement or of length, quality and satisfaction through consumption developed onto all the platforms of the communicative system;
- *brand activation*, since brand stories are often aimed at involving new customers into changing their consuming behaviour (within creative spaces identified by the company), through the transmedia system;
- *brand franchise*, since, through the audience’s response to the new narratives and to the brand stories.

In order to take an active part in those different aspects of the brand in all the media platforms involved in the project, the “participative consumers” and the brand stories mainly use:

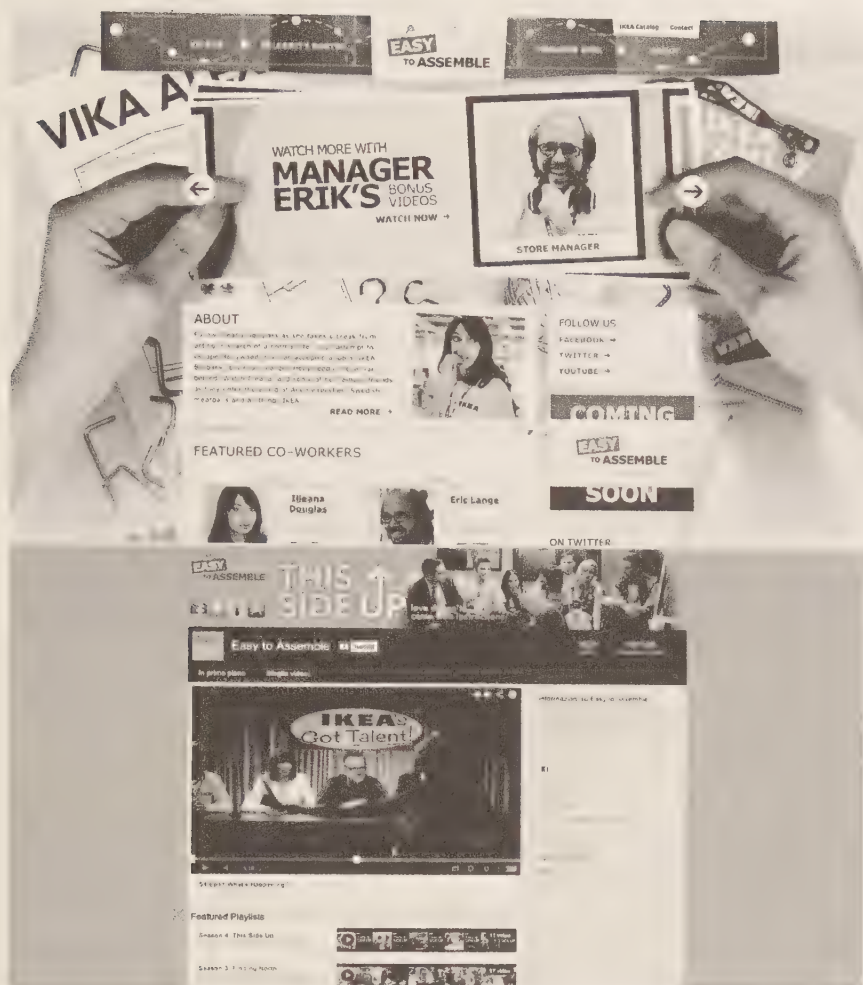
7. Zeiser, A., *Transmedia Marketing...* cit., p. 124-25.

- structure of the story with different narrative layers corresponding to different communicative registers and experiential opportunities for the public;
- the presence of *early adopters*⁸, *devoted fans* and *influencers* potentially able to become the brand's sounding board in order to have the most appropriate interpretation of the communicative action, even the most original and provocative;
- the use of few characters or at least one character (*testimonial*) in order to favour the self-identification of the consumer and leading he or she into the story;

Also in this case, let us present with two examples. In 2008 Ileana Douglas created the web series *Easy to Assemble*, which tells the adventures of an IKEA clerk and her bizarre colleagues, all with insuppressible artistic ambitions. Its value enhanced by the presence of famous actors and directors, the series uses a brand story which makes a very smart merging, with different television genres combining in each episode. Its main objective is the brand's vicinity to families, even though the series is supported by transmedia strategies only in particular cases such as for example the possibility for the public to rent a space in their houses where the IKEA catalogue could be displayed in plain sight, in the living room, in the bedroom, and so on...

An example of brand exploitation achieved with a transmedia narrative project is that created for NY agency Campfire in 2012. Harley-Davidson wanted a new and younger audience to be introduced to their timeless American brand. They wanted to create a destination for a new generation of fans to come together and interact. Campfire conceived both *The Ridebook* and *The Rideline* as digital environments to bring the brand to new life. *The Ridebook* in particular was conceived as: "The riding

8. For a definition of *early adopter* as pioneers of media consumption and as an élite of new consumers 'chased' by producers and publicists, see Jenkins, H., *Cultura...* cit., p. XLVII.

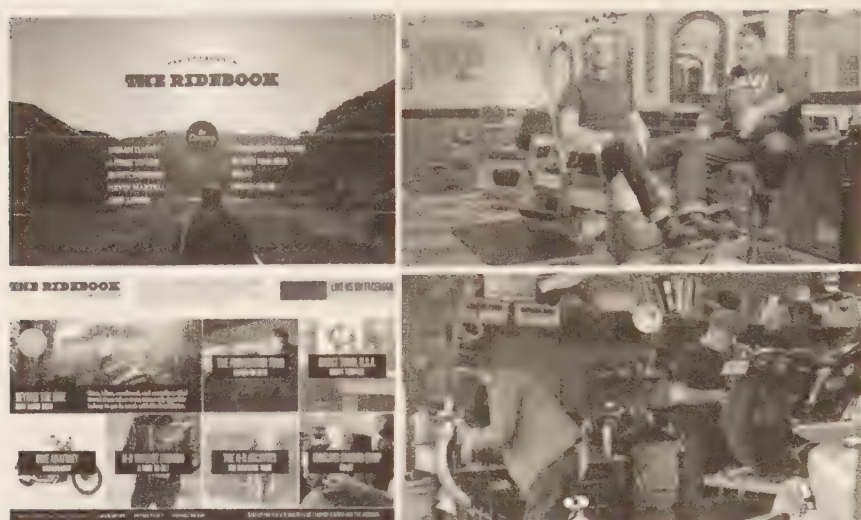


Img. 5.6 IKEA – Easy to Assemble (2008) and its YouTube channel, in an episode which set the famous Swedish store in a “Ikea’s got talent”, example of transmedia merging TV based.

manual from the voice of those few who cherish the search for a new scenery with the wind in their face”⁹. As these fan communities grow, they aim to show how Harley-Davidson owners’ lives were intertwined with the iconic motorcycle company’s past, present and future. Strong characters, old-styled

9. <http://www.campfirenyc.com>

environments and traditional storytelling bridging from the Web to TV and digital platforms were the points of strength of the project and of the brand exploitation operation.



Img. 5.7 Harley Davidson – Harley Davidson Ridebook and Rideline (2012). Website and character of one of the brief documentaries: barbers and riders at Tomcat NY.

It is well known as transmedia loves celebrations and is eager to find in sudden and valuable occasions to express its potential at its best. This is even truer when it comes to fashion world, a universe spinning around rituals such as runway shows, seasons, collections, anniversaries and prizes, and has very weak fictional foundations, usually limited to a given stylist's, a fashion house's or a product's brand stories. Yet, fashion brands need to create lifelong relationships on multiple production lines and collections. An example?

In 2013 Burberry wanted to celebrate its 150 years of business and decided to create *Burberry World*, a concept that has become a sort of 'permanent philosophy' for communicating and promoting the brand since then. It all started with the e-book *Open Space*, which contains animations and old photographs of the brand, to make the whole project aiming at promoting

Burberry's founding value: trust. This was applied not only to consumers but with associates business partners and investors (in different countries and continents at the same time) in the first place. In cooperation with Google and Grow, Burberry launched the campaign *Burberry Kisses*, an app that allowed the user to send their pictures and interact in the official advertising of the campaign by simply wearing a Burberry item of clothing, and kissing the screen of the mobile phone. Then it was the music's turn to become the primary asset in the communicative system and the engine of the brand's britishness and behaviour. On the company's web site, *Burberry World*, a section called *Burberry Acoustic* was created, hosting young British music talents performing on video. Those clips were then brought into the real world thanks to outdoor concerts, worldwide in-store performances and ledwall screenings. This was basically done in order to lower down the average age of Burberry target consumers and then lead all their audience into the creation of an emotional bond to embody the brand and its history.

Differently from Burberry, the luxury french brand Chanel used a character-based type of transmedia storytelling in its 2012-2014 campaigns, but it was more digital than real-world oriented. Linear formats spread the character Coco Chanel in documentaries and in social media activities, and utilized touch points either in pre-purchase than in purchase and post-purchase experience. The campaign *Inside Chanel* re-interpreted Coco Chanel's role and biography with a multistrend series. Each episode began with the words 'Once upon a time' and used archive footage. As Stine Johansen reports: "Chapter 12 featured a tour guide through the streets where Chanel was originally founded. Anchoring the story at a specific place allows users to move from the digital platform to their own reality, binding those two worlds and sending an enforced message".¹⁰ Facebook, YouTube and the other social media platforms which did not

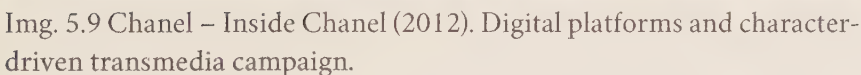
10. Johansen, S., *Transmedia and Fashion Case studies and potentials*, Ref. to "Fashion Film & Transmedia. An anthology of knowledge and practice", 2017, pp. 83-95.



Img. 5.8 Burberry – Burberry World (2013). Digital platforms, music, in-store and outdoor performances, social network profiles in different continents.

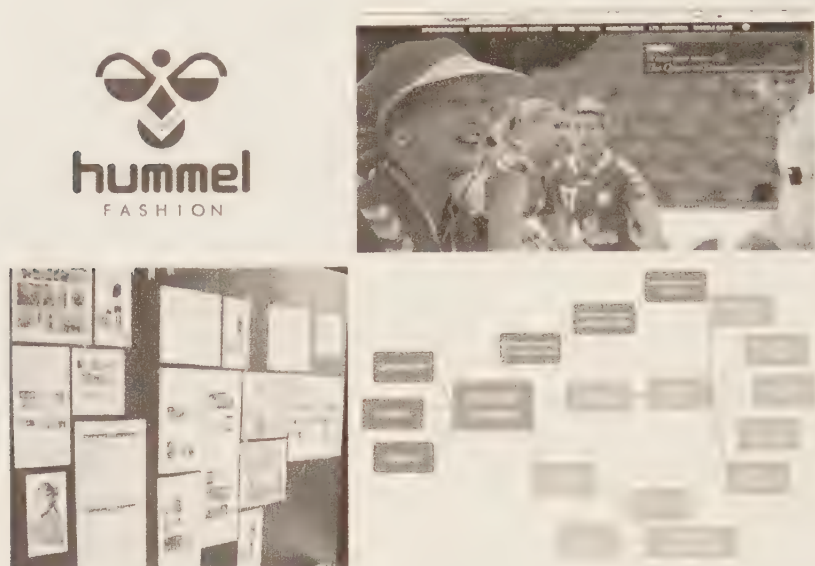
possess the aesthetic characteristics of a luxury brand, used the black/white, tweed and pearl color branding in the art direction.

A different kind of example is represented by another successful fashion brand: that of the leader in sportswear for athletes and prosumers, sponsor of the Danish national football club, Hummel. At the end of 2016, a small group of young creatives linked to VIA University – Fashion & Transmedia of Aarhus, created and developed for Hummel the project *Change the World through Sport*. The project had two goals: creating a new story angle for the brand perception and celebrating the effective social impact of the “Hummel Universe”.



The project consisted in a 3D Video Mapping experience to be performed in larger Danish cities / a teaser film on Facebook / pics-video on Instagram (#Makehistory) / a Portrait Film of Hummel Ambassadors / the video *Discover your own story* and user generated *Win a Sponsorship* videos. A final contest for small sportsclub would then launch a call to action for sports clubs promising to the best 5 teams an annual Hummel sponsorship to fulfill all their needs. The asset *Hummel Ambassadors*, in the

meanwhile, would use 5 athletes to identify and share positive messages with the audience. Finally, all the contents produced would be saved on Hummel Universe and celebrated in an annual event for testimonials and fans: the first “transmedia party” in Hummel’s history.



Img. 5.10 Hummel – Change the World through Sport! (2016). Platform layout and visuals from the Hummel Universe.

GAMIFICATION

Translating into gaming oriented actions a company’s brand identity involves the integration of play dynamics into communication and promotion of products or services. A significant part of the public today gets fond of a given brand in a more long-lasting and effective way than before, and it prefers to “play” the brand rather than just listen to its slogans. The aim of this kind of strategy is quite clear: get the public closer to more complex messages in an easier and friendlier way; restructure subjects which were felt as ‘too ordinary’ – or conversely not enough popular – and, at the same time enhance and refresh the brand’s intimacy with the public – what goes with the definition

of customer engagement – through games. Gamification offers transmedia promotion campaigns:

- informal and spontaneous, positive memorization (*mark up*) of the brand, granted by the positive interaction given by the experience of gaming;
- a deeper experience of the brand between consumer and product, thanks to the game;
- development of a different brand awareness by the consumer/player about the brand's universe (for example with experience and educational games);
- the creation of a database of consumers which would be impossible to reach out in any other way, but very present in the advergame microcosm.

In transmedia, a brand's gamification, or the gamification of a narrative experience can range from the proposition of a simple interaction with a given story to the creation of advergames or extremely free creative experiences such as *open worlds* and *sandboxes* (narrative spaces where audience's engagement is encouraged without limitations of creativity and self-expression). Within transmedia communicative systems dedicated to companies and to institutional communication, the element of game can be exercised through two basic activities:

- the creation of a brand gamification project whose task is to reinterpret the activity, the role and the image of the company through games used to illustrate, describe or directly experience its actions;
- the enrichment of promotional and advertising offer with forms of brand experience such as events, team games, urban quests, and so on...

An example with regard to the first point is that activated by Lego in 2012 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of its Australian market launch. Lego created a *Festival of Play* which moved

around the country, launched by an online trailer and immediately transferred into the real world thanks to the creation of urban forests and pop-up playpits inside and outside city centres. In the meanwhile the public would create posters dedicated to the idea of 'play' and *'Play Days'* were organized in schools with the aim of celebrating the milestones of Australian history, all translated in a LEGO light. The students' creations were published on the project's official web site, while an m-site would real time update the public on the events all over Australia. In the digital world an app would transform every piece of LEGO into a game. The project eventually ended with an interactive Christmas card, *The Lost Brick*. 15 million dollar profits in terms of communication, 400.000 visitors for the events, a sale rise on the local market of 18% in a year. Results do not need comments, really.



Img. 5.11 LEGO – Lego Festival of Play (2012). Urban installations and digital platforms.

To give an example of brand experience created for the ‘inner’ audience of a brand we must take a step back in time and deal with the case of one of IT world giants.

In 2010, after the great success of its previous *The Threshold*, Juxt Interactive asked No Mimes Media to partner in creating a transmedia experience to entertain and inform Cisco’s Global Sales Force. “*The Hunt* put employees at the center of a thriller where characters sent and responded to their emails, left phone messages, communicated through Facebook and Twitter, even asked them to retrieve items from a dead drop and to send them photographs and information. And while helping fictional characters Isabel and Keith escape an ancient secret organization, the sales force also learned about new Cisco technologies coming to market. Cisco had new demands for the 2010 experience. A geographically and culturally dispersed sales force raises challenges when it comes to introducing dozens of new products and technologies each year. Cisco wanted *The Hunt* to have global reach, to educate, to build collaboration, and to be fun. This demanded new ways of storytelling and new ways of thinking. *The Hunt* was quick and intense, unfolding in real time in just two weeks. *The Hunt* involved audience members from countries around the world, including China, India, Netherlands, Germany, Norway, Pakistan, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It highlighted new Cisco technologies like Pulse and Mediator, painlessly engaging the audience in what those technologies do and how they work. How? “Players collaborated across silos, creating networks of cross-disciplinary experts. *The Hunt* pushed the boundaries of storytelling with events unfolding on Twitter and Facebook, and in the real world where the audience had to use social engineering to find and secure a package with vital information”¹¹. Created with the collaboration of transmedia pioneer Christy Dena, and with thousands of players highly engaged around the world, *The Hunt* once again proved that transmedia experiences can effectively be

11. <http://nomimes.com/hunt>

used not only to meet the goals of a brand, but to entertain their audience as well.

As we have noted, the most important actions necessary to revisit and customize gamewise a product or the whole image of a company are not different from the traditional ones, although their application to multiplatform narrative and technological strategies makes precise strategic and editorial interventions essential. First of all the study of a brand's strengths and inadequate parameters to the new market. Secondly, the creation of cross-cultural universes and characters which can have a positive impact on the imagery of different types of users in terms of consumption and media habits. These actions require a close and accurate study of the technological platforms, the networks and the consumption attitudes of the potential target for the experience.

In this view, the use of affinity spaces and 'special effects' taken into analysis in the previous chapters of this book are crucial tools to – for example – make adjustments, or follow the public in the real world and digital spaces where they are used to traditionally interact with their most loved brands. Now, since in the previous chapters I have already presented cases of advergames and alternate reality games, I shall here make yet two different examples: one of a reality game and one of a transmedia ghost campaign.

2008. GMP, recruitment and HR world giant launched a transmedia campaign for the Asian market, and it does it almost with no costs at all. They had two main objectives: increase their brand's diffusion and win the loyalty of a new public: the people in search of a job. The campaign was based on a deeply heart-felt subject for the asian population: the relationship between life quality and the incessant rhythms of work.

The project's rabbit hole was a video uploaded on YouTube where two Singapore clerks who were working long hours in their office are visited, while in the elevator, by a ghost. The two

are so tired they do not even realize of the ghost's presence. The company's video cameras – on the other hand – have everything on video, which becomes viral and is viewed 500.000 times in ten days. After that, on the association's official blog, which was investigating on the apparition, three ghostbusters are hired and a call on action on the Web and on social network is launched. The immediate result is the spontaneous, operative and communicative contribution of associations specialized in paranormal phenomena, newspapers, TV shows all over the world, users who believed they have lived similar experiences, workers unions, bloggers and even studies on special effects trying to reveal the 'technical secrets' of the video. Finally, the 1st of May of that year revealed that they were beyond such an action, which triggered an amused media grapevine echoing all over the world, based on the subject of the story: no one should work late hours. The final result was a 30% increase of sign-ups on the company's web site and the equivalent of 500.000 USD in terms of media coverage completely free.

Conversely, if a company wants to conquer newer portions of the same market it operates on, a good example can be taken from *The Pink Squad* experience, a transmedia project realized in 2009 in Slovakia by insurance company Union Insurance.

The Pink Squad action aimed at denouncing dangerous driving behaviours responsible for the rising of insurance policy prizes and at finally giving those consumers burdened by those few irresponsible driver's behaviour a new, audible voice. This is a clear example of a two goal structure. The action was successfully achieved thanks to the intervention of a task force of activists who, wearing quirky pink masks, for weeks went around punishing in a theatrical way those responsible of behaviours in open breach of the street code. The campaign's rabbit hole was a viral video presenting the Pink Squad manifesto, broadcasted in an seemingly illegal way on the country's main broadcasters. The squad's website and several videos showing the nastiest punishments carried out by the

squad were the following steps. It was only after two weeks of posting videos online and broadcasting on the main national channels, followed by thousands of denounce and support messages posted by consumers on the main social networks that Union Insurance openly stated they were behind such an action. It was then that official spots and traditional communication started.

Results? A million web pages viewed, 80.000 friends on Facebook and, above all, a free media campaign worth 500.000 euro. And yet the story of Pink Squad was not over, as the fictional group became the promoter of a “National Weekend Without Road Accidents”, which was followed by thousands of Slovak drivers who were invited to display something pink on their cars. This action resulted in a diffusion and brand awareness and, most importantly, in a significant 80% reduction of car accidents in that year's All Saints weekend. Finally, mechanics dressed in pink for that occasion would become the company's testimonials in all the car repair garages of the country. These elements are suggesting a further reflection on another aspect of transmedia applied to brand and corporate storytelling: as Simon Staffans has it: “in order for the audience to fully immerse themselves in what the company, brand, product or service is about, we first need interconnected stories that support each other and build over the long run”¹², to succeed.

The examples we have described and all the other successful cases over the last few years clearly demonstrate how all the social and cultural differences a brand or a transmedia campaign face in a moment of transition from a market to another may nowadays be seen as a resource and a basket full of opportunities, rather than an operative or editorial limit for the transmedia author. However, since this subject shall be dealt with in the following chapter of this book, let us investigate the contribution

12. Staffans, S., *One year...* cit., p. 59.



Img. 5.12 Union Insurance – The Pink Squad (2009). Viral videos, newspaper articles, online messages sent by users on the official website, Facebook profile and videogames.

transmedia can give other kinds of products or public or private services: those with an artistic and cultural vocation.

TRANSMEDIA FOR INSTITUTIONS AND ARTS

The use of multiple media to support institutions, public or private bodies and associations operating in the fields of art promotion, education and culture is one of the most natural fields of application for transmedia and yet, at the same time, also one of the most undervalued and fragmented internationally. We all know art is fragile. It is the province of personal interpretation, of unpredictable or even 'timeless' consumption. Its rites are performed in limited spaces and times, where the

spotlight lights on and off very quickly. Lastly, art is made of 'behind the scenes' very difficult to access and which require a great deal of patience.

Yet, at the same time the imaginative sense, the use of storytelling and the performative nature so familiar with transmedia consumption would fit very comfortably into the creation of integrated communication projects such as virtual museums, centres, foundation networks, exhibition centres, theatre schedule and posters, itinerant exhibitions, just to make a few examples.

For these reasons transmedia projects involved with art and institution are always *supportive* (especially those transnational), or *omnivorous* (to leave a trace on the media). They are never *competitive* (because they are too fragile to afford a positive fragmentation of their audience). The weapons transmedia has to act more effectively in this field are:

- active involvement of audiences belonging to different targets, especially through the activation of strategies of bridging between platforms;
- the social media as pivot of the communicative system, because they are economic as well as direct persuasion platforms able to host the content and the 'story' artistic projects always present with;
- the discovery of spaces, places, workforce and mechanisms which 'create day by day the magic of art' (especially in terms of storytelling);
- the activation of long term practical education experiences hosted in the same spaces where exhibitions or performances take place (thus enhancing the value of the story's *genius loci*);
- the presence in the media (and particularly in the internet) of influencers easy to be identified and of extremely 'consumption-vertical' communities: these

actors need to operate internationally and with a particular predisposition for participative interactivity.

Lastly, art and institutions can largely benefit from those spaces in the last chapter I have identified as the 'affinity spaces' of transmedia consumption, that is real world experiences, choice excitement, immersive environments and story-based entertainment experiences. The two examples I am about to give in the following paragraphs are again 'personal' and concern two *transpaces* crucial to artistic expression and production: museums and theatres.

The first project, *Inventori di Mondi*, was a container in which I coordinated young designers with the aim of creating a transmedia communication system of the omnivorous type. It was 2011 and the client was the Museum of the Mind in Rome¹³. The project started with an analysis of the history of the institution and of the quarter of the city where it is located (the old criminal asylum in the compound of Hospital S. Maria della Pietà, an actual city within the city). The investigation was carried out through two different and yet complementary materials: documents, such as video, interviews, iconographic research, and fictional, with an emotional itinerary to be carried out on the territory. A series of short movies dealing with the disorders treated in the hospital, graphic postcards where Rorschach inkbolts were given a QR code to be turned into online reference for all the material in the communicative system. This low budget project succeeded in communicating the museum imagery, telling its synthetic universal structures (the asylum's rules and the laws on mental disorders), its imaginative isotopes (the relationship between normality and diversity, identified – for instance – in concepts such as 'getting out while in') and its archetypal figures (the patients) narrated in the full respect of the different interaction forms of its halls and moving them in

13. Project coordinated for Museo della Mente and IED Istituto Europeo di Design of Rome with media designers Alessandro Alpago, Daniel Bedusa, Nicola Cersizimo, Tommaso Del Prete, Davide Di Santo, Andrea Incardona and Micaela Monterosso.

virtual spaces which could make its online reputation grow and, indirectly, the number of potential visitors as well.



Img. 5.13 *Inventori di mondi* and the Museo della Mente of Rome (2011). Website, theme trailers, postcards and emotional itinerary, interviews and videos telling the stories of the patients of the asylum.

A different case is represented by the series *Fabbrica*, produced by IED (European Institute of Design) and Rome Opera Theatre in 2016. This project introduced in the circuit of European webseries what I personally define the *vice versa paradigm*.

Fabbrica is a Webseries/TV series which tells the story of five participants of the first Young Artist Programme of the theatre. A docuseries which stresses the importance of the sacrifice, the fear of the stage, the responsibility and the great power of talent

in the Opera world. Shot in restricted locations with a particular focus on the 'behind the scenes' of the theatre performances of the season from the POV of a singer, a director, a compositor, a production designer and a costume designer, each episode focusing on the magic of the art, with the aim of engaging the audience in an emotional continuum from the first day of the "Fabbrica" to the final show of all the participants. The transmedia project founded the brand identity for the series (imagining the Fabbrica as a steampunk-artistic lab under the Opera's building in Rome), produced the series and a social media campaign, animated character posters and the official website of Fabbrica. But... the writing process of the series started after six months of social media management of the official channel and of the Opera Theatre, all managed by the creators of *Fabbrica*, to study the audience behaviour, attitude and consumption before going on the fly. At the time, to enroll the audience in the story world, we created character poster, teaser video daily released at the same time, facebook streaming of some of the masterclasses held with the artists involved in the story, artworks and graphics to keep the hype high on the story world. In the same days, *Fabbrica*'s participants were involved in labs with school students and kids dedicated to the different shows presented by the theatre's season (all showed with video on line). Finally, the project was launched online during the Christmas Holiday in Rome with an amazing performance: three singers of the *Fabbrica* were involved in a 3D Projection mapping on the facade of the theatre for 15 days, performing the three arias "Casta Diva" (*Norma*, Vincenzo Bellini), "Vissi d'arte" (*Tosca*, Giacomo Puccini) and "Una voce poco fa" (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Gioacchino Rossini). Then, an amazing "Opera bus" started playing *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in some strategic, popular squares of the city, to engage and enroll new audiences to the Opera World.¹⁴

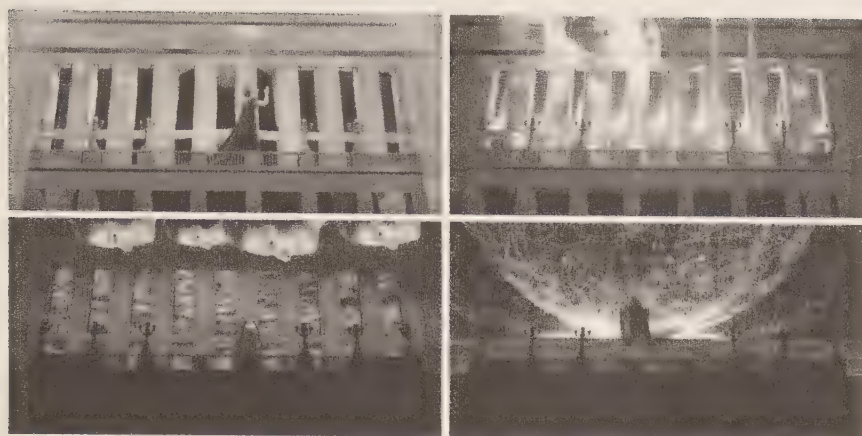
14. Project coordinated for Teatro dell'Opera di Roma and IED Istituto Europeo di Design with the filmmakers, the sound designers and the interaction designers: Valerio Argenio, Edoardo Ballato, Federica Cannavale, Beatrice Cocchia, Ilaria Fusco,



Img. 5.14 Fabbrica – Teatro dell'Opera of Rome (2016). Website, theme trailers, pictures from the shows and character posters of the protagonists of the narrative.

I now would like to close the chapter with another example focusing on giving more value to a cultural event, rather than on promoting a structure or a project. The case we are looking at is that of the 2012 Brisbane Writers Festival in Australia, an event dedicated to all literature and narrative lovers celebrating its fiftieth anniversary with the creation of a communicative system of the omnivorous type, centred on both the web and the real,

Giulio Dominici, Silvia Latini, Carolina Mammini, Martina Monaco, Simone Patti, Beatrice Perotto, Matteo Serafini, Valeria Vaglio.



Img. 5.15 Fabbrica – Teatro dell'Opera of Rome. Three singers performing a 3D Projection on the theatre's facade in occasion of the web launch of the series.

physical space and aimed at broadening the festival's target also to a younger audience.

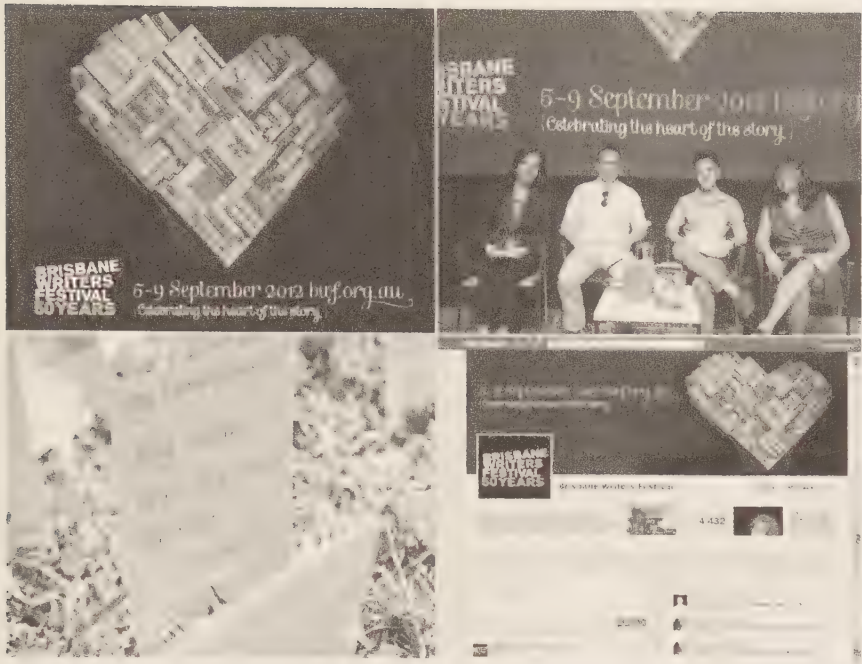
The project was named *Celebrate the heart of the Story* and its rabbit hole was the publication on Facebook of a contest where festival goers were invited to actively contribute to the creation of the venue. Hundreds of novels, essays and short stories were sent to the festival organization in response to such online call to action; those contributions were then used to create a giant installation placed in the festival physical location. "An heart of books" which became both the campaign testimonial on all traditional and online media, and a sculpture realized by a famous Australian artist. Moreover, with the aim of making the very heart of the narrative beat fast before the festival launch, fifty famous international writers were invited to contribute to the creation of a story via Twitter, using the hashtag #BWF50. Each author published two tweets a day for fifty days: the activity was extremely popular and was soon transferred from the 'champions' of literature on to their most fervent fans. Hundreds of customizable postcards were disseminated all around the pubs and venues of the festival to invite students and visitors to talk

in physical presence about their favourite authors and give their point of view on 'the heart of a story.' Results were again amazing: 30% increase in Twitter followers, 35% on Facebook, more than 7 million dollars worth media advertising for free. More than 500.000 new contacts to the twitter story and the highest number of visitors to the festival in its whole history, reaching 300.000 units. All fuelled by a very low budget and a transmedia project even a small association or a cultural foundation can afford.

As we could see, transmedia storytelling applied to communication and the promotion of companies and institutions can be very similar to that dedicated to narrative and entertainment: a container of imaginative universes and technological solutions but, at the same time of strategies and actions which so often gets near to the idea of voluntary work, activism, collective experiments and a positive image of social and cultural differences. Strong interactions, so intense they deserve an in depth investigation in the next station of our journey.

WORKSHOP 5 – TRANSMEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Choose a brand, an institution or an artistic project and carefully evaluate its potential and communicative strenght. Create the transmedia communicative system you judge to be the most appropriate to vehiculate your message. Identify target, platforms, content to implement, the most appropriate language to use and the activities to create in order to give the best value to the different strengths of your project and its potential cultural, emotional and commercial results. Enhance at its best the brand identity through transmedia story worlds. Create a supportive – or omnivorous – communicative system and try to make a plausible preventive plan on the impact the project may have. Make your plans rigorously on figures taken from the same market segment – both traditional and transmedia – you are planning to operate on. It is way more crucial to use all the necessary time to research on affordable data, rather than follow



Img. 5.16 Brisbane Writers Festival (2012). The 'heart of books' realized by the readers and sessions with the writers via Twitter. Literary postcards made by readers and the Festival's Facebook profile, 'primary asset' of the event.

the strength of the concept or the instinct of the storyteller as it was for some fragile or risky projects we have described during this chapter.

CHAPTER 6

TRANSMEDIA FOR GOOD AND EDUCATION

One of the earliest prejudices on transmedial narratives is the proliferation of content that stems from transforming a story into narrative fragments spread over different media. Another is the short life of the works and consumer experiences consumed by users. Finally there are those who accuse transmedia narratives of being a form of merchandising and a mere promotion technique rather than a revolution of traditional storytelling.

In these pages we have already experimented with practical theories and examples to what extent those objections are anachronistic and unsupported. Nonetheless, I decided to focus the present chapter on demonstrating the last of those three prejudices wrong, investigating how transmedia can contribute today to better the world that we live in.

For example, working for the service of non-governmental agencies or non-profit associations. Or inventing independent projects related to issues such as environmental protection, collective well-being, cohesion and social emergencies, international peace. Or even contributing to education or research, always by means of communication and storytelling, technology and information. Analyzing the transmedia way under this perspective substantially changes some of the

“environmental” conditions investigated and described in the previous chapters. For example, transmedia for good or for education:

- continuously alters the times and the operating modes of the communication system, especially in the presence of crisis situations;
- puts the “theme” of the tale at the center of the project and reveals it instead of masking it;
- focuses on the *emotional contagion* as a major feature of the project;
- concentrates economic and strategic efforts in developing or adapting truly effective delivery platforms rather than lingering on the esthetics of content;
- immediately puts experience and its sharing on the same level;
- researches simple and rapid mechanisms of economic reward;
- tends to maximize the outstandingness of events at all times.

An example? Let's start from a serious international humanitarian crisis. On the occasion of the Haitian earthquake in January 2010, the American Red Cross managed to raise 22 million dollars by the Monday following the disaster, thanks to a huge transmedia campaign in which The White House and the Corporation for National and Community Services took part. The main asset of this omnivorous system was mobile, with a text-to-give campaign whose testimonials included, among others, Michelle Obama. The message was very simple: “Send A Message & Save A Life, Donate \$ 10 To Red Cross Haiti Relief, Text Haiti To 90999”, yet a rich network of broadcasters and media companies all over the world joined in in support. In Chicago, just to mention a case, eleven TV networks, nine radio

stations and two newspapers got involved within a few days. In the first 24 hours of the event on the Red Cross official website and on its social network profiles, millions of users and companies set themselves in action in order to raise funds, giving their contribution in the form of messages, short articles and comments gained the project further donations.

On the American Red Cross YouTube channel the first video on the condition of the island – five hours after the earthquake – was published. In the following days, more reports and in-depth analyzes from all over the world were uploaded. Fear and love, joy and sadness, anger and shame... emotional contagion pervaded all the media outcomes of the project and turned into immediate volunteer experiences in the emergency, as Gloria Huang, social media specialist for ARC, said. “On Facebook we had tons of fans, and there were a lot of discussions and forums where volunteers from previous campaigns were offering tips and advice to answering the questions of those interested in volunteering for the Haiti relief efforts; the Twitter account, instead, remained a source of news, links to donation pages, and updates from the ground. And on the Red Cross’ main blog, first hand accounts, photos, and videos have been posted with unerring regularity”¹. A vast amount of agile content in a blessed network, sharing web, mobile and social network content as never before seen in the humanitarian field.

Different, more programmatic, and more oriented to the ability to influence social issues through media-based storytelling was the transmedia project *He named me Malala* created by the American agency Campfire for National Geographic. Theme of the campaign: give voice to the 60 million women who have no access to education in different countries of the world, according to what was also reported in the 2016 homonymous documentary *He Named Me Malala* dedicated to young Pakistani activist Malala Yousafzai, Nobel Prize Peace in 2014. The project created for the occasion had as primary asset the creation of

1. <http://nonprofit.about.com>

animated avatars that users and supporters could upload to their Facebook profile, inspired by the school book's model. Each one of us could have been in that book and at the same time one of the women who could never be in there. Accessible via smartphone and reintroduced by a TV documentary, billboard screens mounted in several American cities and influencers online, the campaign produced 50,000 dollars in 4 days in the US market alone to support female access to education.



Img. 6.1 He named me Malala (2016). Visuals and platforms of the transmedia project.

The example of *He named me Malala* is representative of the *paradigm shift* needed in “Transmedia for Good” for the representation of the reality that is to be changed. This is done through two fundamental techniques:

- *reimagining*, or the formulation of a “middle” world between the real and the represented. Not a filter but an

original *story angle* transforming perception and collective knowledge into microcosms that can be viralized according to a particular reading key;

- the finalization of content to actual *crowd-driven changes*, that is massive change processes obtained through the sharing of more meaningful narrative and communicative forms than the traditional ones, widely shared and totally interoperative.

In this sense, as Lina Srivastava, transmedia storyteller and international consultant, as it: the power of transmedia storytelling is to inspire *crowd driven changes* through different media that consists of six aspects:

- co-creation;
- collaboration;
- layered storytelling;
- an ecosystems approach to narrative design and social action;
- the ability to experiment with narrative and take risks;
- rapid interconnections.

The combination of these aspects makes transmedia storytelling an innovative avenue to inspire action, by combining community-driven, bottom-up, grassroots solutions with shared resources and capacities, and connecting crowds and their collective power through stories and art that create a global culture of collaboration.

What about the authors? Again Lina Srivastava: “a good transmedia activism project drives authors to be strategic, not reactionary or rushed to create their story architecture. Authors who are creating stories that deal with affected communities or social issues to understand they are members of a collective group of people – whether through formal or informal networks

– that have already been working on these issues, and stories and engagement channels which are part of the fabric of the movement or a larger system of projects. A good project which drives authors to create entry points for multiple stakeholders to co-create and participate through the multiple channels that carry the story, to create a more layered, nuanced, and human experience”.²

TRANSMEDIA ACTIVISM AND MOBILIZATION

Implemented worldwide for political, social, environmental and educational urgencies, transmedia is already able to inspire, stir up and promote epochal changes. One of its strongest and most persuasive powers relies in fact in its great ability to suddenly reduce the distance between perception and imagination in the public and to amplify messages on a global scale, triggering mechanisms of self-appropriation of themes and calls to action whose extent is difficult to define. By creating a kind of *artificial imagination*, transmedial communication originates interpretative models of the engaging and absolute reality. At the same time, the contagion between languages, images and platforms overwhelms the use of oppositional interpretative pairs such as outer space and inner space, real and virtual world, propaganda and extremism, creativity and critical meaning, impulse and retrospection, ethos and brand... messages, content and news to be transmitted both in the real world and digital ones.

The most impressive example in this regard is that of *transmedia activism* and *transmedia mobilization*, tools that start from the *Narrative Design for Social Change* to create dramatic modes that can amplify public participation reality, digital and virtual contexts to raise awareness of it influencing their collective perception and structuring communities around issues of global importance.

2. Srivastava, L., Ref. to: Giovagnoli, M., *Transmedia Storytelling e Comunicazione*, 2013, p. 190-91.

Transmedia activism asks audience to walk in the shoes of the people depicted in the stories. Asks audiences to explore three things while traveling through a transmedia world related to a social issue: empathy, a broadened perspective, and action. Asks them to engage with the characters and situations in a number of ways, through a number of entry points, to create a layered perspective. In other words, it asks audiences to immerse themselves in the circumstances and situations faced by others, and commit to culturally and strategically appropriate actions in concert with the transmedia storytellers and the depicted community, to create a shift toward positive, livable, and sustainable conditions. — *Lina Srivastava – digital strategist, activist and consultant (UNESCO, the World Bank, UNICEF, Donor Direct Action)*

Again, the keyword is public engagement, but it is also a matter of raising awareness on a theme (*issue awareness*) by means of real-world documents and contents created *ad hoc* (*actionable content story universe*) to provoke the audience into triggering spontaneous actions that can really make a difference (*change creation*).

From a transmedia point of view, it is curious to note how this path resumes by means of induction the narrative paradigms we have dealt with in the second chapter of this book. For example, it is likewise interesting to remark how issue awareness corresponds in this case the hero's call of adventure, his or her entry into the extraordinary world acts as an access to the actionable content story of a humanitarian project and the change creation is our return with the elixir at the end of the story, or the transformational moment reached thanks to the narration. More in general, all these storytelling tools found in this book (*two narrative goals, twin narratives, non-linear / parallel / asynchronic / simultaneous narratives etc.*) are powerful ways to foster a story and its change into "transmedia for goods".

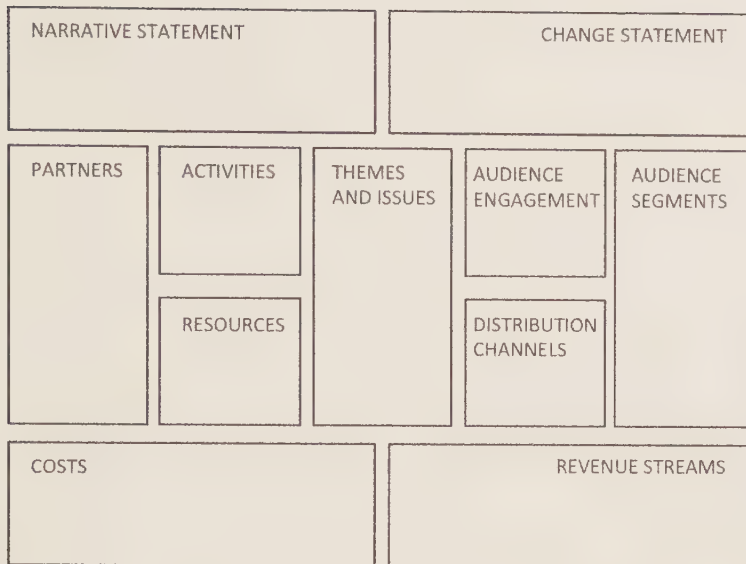
What are on the other hand the necessary and sufficient conditions to make a real social impact happen through transmedia? First of all, answering questions about the context and the actors with whom you are working. How does this

project move beyond awareness? How does it use its platforms to connect audiences to commit to a particular worldview, advocacy or action? How does the project invest in community-centered participation? Does it have at its core the use of local voices, in direct partnership with platform creators? How does the project use “local” stories, stories that come directly from the communities themselves? How do all the inhabitants of the story world (audiences, authors, stakeholders, influencers, affected communities) navigate that world? Do platforms match access? Are the stories, technologies and solution appropriate to the culture and the community? Is the standard of relevance, resonance, and respect met?³

Then it is important to disseminate the story with targets to be achieved through progressive calls to action and forms of inner hierarchies (*audience segments*) present in the different assets of the communicative system. In transmedia activism, the “theme” of the story also identifies the mission of the audience that will have to evolve in the simplest way from “clicktivism” and the casualty of consumption within the communication system to activism and narrative volunteering. An example?

Localized and centered on the narrative of the social microcosm of social problems we can find the transmedia project *Women for Sale* (2016-Present) created by the interdisciplinary team of the Multimedia Communication Department (DCM) of the National University of Rosario, coordinated by Fernando Irigaray, and devoted to the topic of women coming from all over South America used for sexual slavery in Argentina. The theme, again, is the message: the crime of human trafficking involves different stages with specific characteristics, each of which acts and operates actors with specific roles, shaping a framework that allows the sexual exploitation of women in Argentina. *Women for Sale* aims to expose some stories narrated by the protagonists themselves, who are the POV of the tale. Women victims,

3. On the rule of the three “R” (respect, relevance, resonance) in creating a more effective social impact through transmedia see: <http://linasrivastava.blogspot.it/>



Img. 6.2 The Mission Media Engagement Strategy Canvas, created by Lina Srivastava. On the left side of the diagram are the actors of the communication; on the right, the strategies and the spaces available to the public; above, the contribution of the authors and actors of the project, below, that of the public.

relatives, members of organizations fighting to clarify the different cases, judicial officials, legislators, members of the security forces and specialists are the voices of the orchestra focusing on the four steps of the phenomenon: *recruitment*, *trafficking*, *sexual exploitation* and *rescue*. The transmedia bouquet is based on a supportive communicative system and consists in:

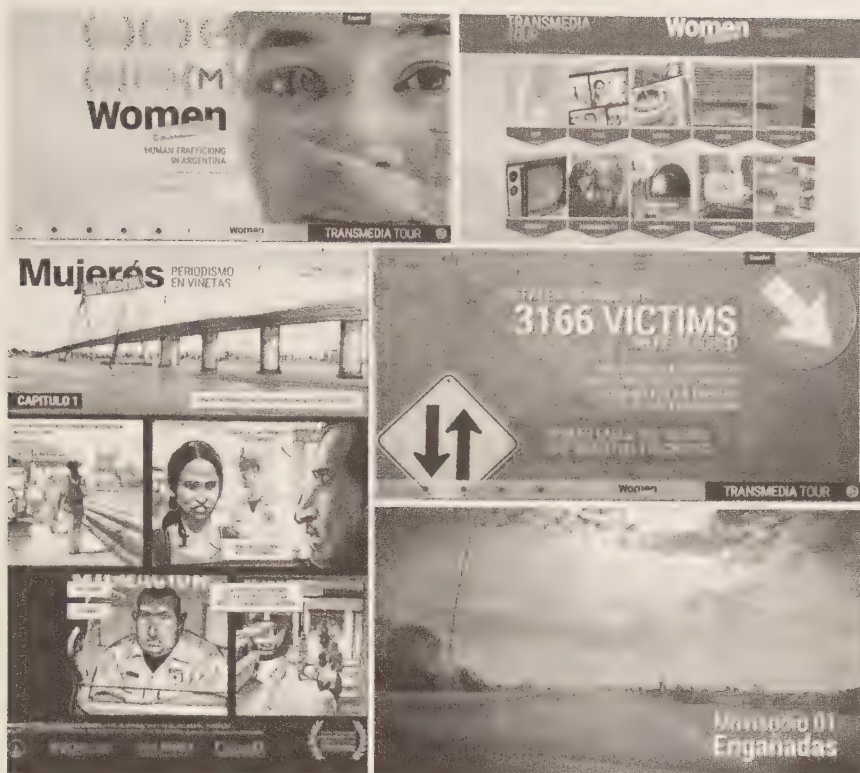
- graphics augmented reality installations;
- comics online (in 5 chapters, revealing the real story of one young victim);
- LED short videos to be projected in commercial malls and in public spaces;

- TV documentaries (focusing on the story of three victims);
- webisodes (on the case of Marita Veron, emblem of the fight against human trafficking in Argentina);
- a website and a collaborative map which presents a series of geo-referenced data, organized into three categories: *missing women* (to indicate location and date when each woman was last seen), *rescued women* (for the set of procedures performed to rescue women in situations of sexual exploitation. Each case marked on the map allows the user to explore data on the case, directly through the information source) and *places of exploitation* (which shows places denounced by sexual exploitation such as whorehouses, cabarets, whiskey bars and private apartments).

A brilliant case of transmedia journalism aiming at what Maya Zuckerman says on the use of transmedia as a concrete communication tool for social changes: “to embrace the positive social movements of the world [...] ending environmental destruction, and elevating the marginalized among us to the equal status of ‘full human being’ regardless of gender, sexual preference, or ethnic background”.⁴

Quite different and more global is another example of transmedia denunciation project. *Kony 2012* is a short film which became a worldwide success by no-profit association Invisible Children to promote a campaign to raise awareness on war crimes against humanity committed in Uganda by Lord Kony, leader of the local Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). The video, which was seen online by more than 100 million people, was transformed into a project of transmedia activism that initially contaminated the media with the *Make Him Famous* campaign (issue awareness of the project) dedicated to showing the world who Joseph Kony really was. He was in fact guilty of kidnappings,

4. Zuckerman, M., *The Collective Journey...* cit.



Img. 6.3 Women for Sale (2016). Transmedia project: online site, TV documentaries, graphics, comics online and interactive maps of the project.

sexual slavery, forced soldier enrollments and mass murders perpetrated above all on children. Then the video entered the real world with events and collective initiatives with the *Stop At Nothing* campaign, also carried out through a kit of gadgets and aimed at active proselytism. Finally with the event called *Cover the night* (a call to action) some cities all over the world were invaded by posters and information to introduce the release of a new movie: *Move*, inviting the anti-Kony people to a world-wide round-up of the White House during the days of the American Presidential Elections, to provide a final media boost to the project before its conclusion in December 2012 (date by which,

according to the goals of its creators, the criminal should have been arrested).



Img. 6.4 Visuals from the various campaigns of the Kony 2012 project.

SOCIAL BENEFIT TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING

What happens when the narrative component grows to equal the importance of the theme, within the transmedia for good? Keeping intact the beneficial role of the project, transmedia gets closer to communication and entertainment and find its expression with the creation of its story worlds: real / digital environments which recreate the original world using different

story angles or innovative reading keys, with a strong capacity to involve and awaken in the public the will to participate actively, rather than to the problem, to its dissemination and resolution. An example?

The first official case of *social benefit transmedia storytelling* was that experimented by US producer Tim Kring in 2010, the year when the aforementioned creator of the *Heroes* television series was the author of the *Conspiracy for Good* project, a social game organized with the Swedish media factory The company P for Nokia. The narrative was structured on the actions taken by the public to support the legal battle of Nadirah X, a singer and elementary teacher in Chataika, East Zambia, against the Blackwell Briggs multinational corporation accused of having stopped the creation of a library for its village students to build an oil pipeline. A fictional initiative aimed at experimenting with the possibilities of inspiring social change through the transmedial tale rather than with active testimony, as in the case of *Kony 2012*. This was a three months alternate reality game, diffused by users via Twitter, YouTube, SMS, online puzzles and three mobile videogames, and then developed in a second phase of the project in a real world game play in London for one month.

A very successful and particularly effective social benefit storytelling case that is directly linked to fundraising for a charitable association is that of the *Every Beat Matters*, project created by James Kuckinski in 2012 for Save The Children. Stressing once again the importance of the 'theme' in transmedia for good, the original concept of the story was made this time by the simple heartbeat of a child recorded in Guatemala, which became the symbol of all children suffering from indigence, illness or crime all over the world. It became the true soul of storytelling, communication system and project design:

- because it was mixed in the base of a song sung by One



Img. 6.5 Conspiracy for Good (2010). Official site and pictures from the action held in London.

Republic (*Feel again*, with over 1 million downloads), the band testimonial of the project;

- because it was on posters reproducing portraits of people working with children; portraits drawn by the echocardiograms of children whom the audience itself was helping to save;
- because it was recorded by users through an iphone app and shared via social networks to make the community of the project wider;
- because it was displayed in interactive installations in

exhibitions organized to raise money for Save The Children.

Media sensing and the metaphorical connection to the pain experienced by children thus reaffirmed the concept on all the media platforms involved in the project: Every beat matters> Every donation matters, with the result of one million dollar worth of PR and earned media and an increase of 700% of donations compared to the previous year.



Img. 6.6 Every Beat Matters (2013). Transmedia project realized by Save the Children with the contribution of One Republic and international partners.

More oriented to narrative and on the active exploration of the microcosms represented by the communication system and the narrative, again are the two examples of transmedia projects that I am about to deal with.

The first is titled *The Last Hijack* and was produced in 2014 by transmedia producer Bruno Felix and the Dutch Submarine channel with The Match Factory, directed by Femke Wolting and Tom Pallotta. *The Last Hijack* is a feature-length film combining documentary footage and animation, and an online transmedia experience allowing viewers a unique and original way to

explore the story of Somali piracy from different perspectives. An example of transcoded concept and merging of two different audio visual (live action and animation), the project allows audiences to explore the story world in the interactive part by means of graphics, photo galleries and audio that trace the trails and the general coordinates of the piracy phenomenon, while in the documentary film we can find the personal story of an exceptional boy facing the ultimate mission of his life, the one that allowed him to leave forever with the country and his family. The narrative space is all devoted to an in-depths investigation on the theme and context, yet limiting the space for the active intervention of the public, who is not called to contribute in any way to the change.

The second example of transmedia storytelling for social change proposed below is totally different from this point of view. Again a case drawn from personal experience and still in progress as I write is that of a transmedial project through which it was possible to enhance individual characteristics and weaknesses and promote a shared social improvement in small or large groups of young people at the same time. Its name is *MU*, like that of the mysterious continent that fought against Atlantis before disappearing. The focus of the narrative is set on the life of three young orphans messing around in Rome. Their need for freedom and independence is a restless challenge but *MU*, the strange orphanage where they live, built in the basement of the artificial lake of EUR, a 1930s' futuristic quarter of Rome, is their microcosmos and protect them, and save them from the brutality of their own destiny. But the audience will work with them and for them, to help them survive and succeed in their fight for a better life. The Transmedia bouquet of *MU* consists in:

- a docuseries;
- an Indie Brand Franchise (Clothing, Accessorize, Schoolkit);
- 2 Novels;



Img. 6.7 The Last Hijack (2013). Official website. Animation/live action screenshot from the documentary, and interactive gallery online.

- 3 Comic books;
- a Web Community;
- real world activities (urban Game, Mudom, Road show in Bookshop and Museums);
- game app.

The docuseries will show the three real guys (not actors) in their daily (mostly legal) activities, with a detection subplot and italian atmospheres. The game app asks the audience to play as one of the three characters. The comic book will tell the backstory of the characters and the origin of each particular talent. The two novels is the only media allowed to transform reality into fiction, playing with two different genres: drama and fantasy. Finally, the social network and the community building activities gives space to an “artistic, underground subculture” (MUISMO) creating *MU*’s identity and reason-why. The aim of the project? To stress the audience attention on the importance of creativity in education and in problematic and borderline teens’ life. The three guys experience creativity and handcrafting every day since they are a cosplay, a fashion designer and a youtuber looking restlessly for expressing themselves somehow. The final social goal of the project, at the same time, is to keep part of the earnings to build a real *MU* in Rome: an orphanage and a fablab where to teach creative disciplines to small groups of vulnerable boys and girls, and where to create and customize *MU*’s products (clothes, gadgets, artworks) to be sold to make *MU*’s maintenance and Muers’ access to schools and universities in the future easier.



Img. 6.8 MU (2017). Transmedia project for social changes.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSERVATION CAMPAIGN

In the second half of the last century organizations and international movements for the defense and the protection of the environment have used mass media in a very effective way; now they are starting to look at transmedial narratives with inventive and an aware technological experimentalism. Today's associations and movements have abandoned the adventurous logic of the tale and the political or verbal attack to shift the battlefield of their mission more and more often toward information and legal defense, international partnerships, funding and interactive support.

The communication systems that they create are more often supportive, focusing on low cost Web and social networks, using videos and with a more and more reduced use of print and paper. Journalism and the creation of professional quality materials are now being developed within the group, and the content it produced are often sold or given to the majors in exchange for visibility or contribution to the activities, which in recent years have also changed their definition from "campaigns" to "operations".

An example? The environmental association Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, founded by activist Paul Watson (one of the creators of Greenpeace), frequently on the front side of the media for his very determined actions aimed at the defense of the oceans and the hydrosphere. Among the most celebrated operations is certainly the fight that Sea Shepherd annually engages against Japanese whalers (*Zero Tolerance*).

Mostly active on the Web, the communication system created by Sea Shepherd for this activity opened in 2008 an interesting transmedia support project based on the *Whale Wars* TV documentary series. Self-produced and completing its sixth season on the Animal Planet channel in 2015, in time, following a ball curve and a supportive communication system, *Whale Wars* offered TV viewers a linear and synchronous fruition, while on

the Web the story preferred non-linear and asynchronous consumption (e.g. with mini-shows distributed on YouTube or with live streaming directly from the ships involved in operations). The narrative forms were similar (with video documentaries, interviews and historical reconstructions) as well as the language of the tale (frank, suggestive, motivating) and the rhythm (tight, syncopated and a rich bridge narrative) made of 'footage' filmed on board and updates from around the world published during the different operations. With an ever-growing and sectorial audience, the project still represents one of the few examples of success of the 'winning team never change' formula in transmedia storytelling worldwide.

Boardings, ramming, reckless zigzags on the Zodiacs in front of the Nipponese 'lab ship' prows... The project created by Sea Shepherd emulated directly the determined and monolithic philosophy of its 'media battles' based on active participation, divulgation by means of communication and on world support more and more often through the Web.

In other cases, media assets of traditional communication campaigns are deconstructed by transmedia mechanisms indirectly and voluntarily fuelled by the public, according to what Henry Jenkins defines "grassroots dynamics" of contemporary convergence culture⁵. This is the case, for example, of *The Last Selfie*, winner of the 2015 Webby Awards for Snapchat campaigns, organized by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), produced by Danish agency Uncle Grey and Turkish 41?29!. The original project developed the idea of the 'short life' of selfies that in social media rapidly disappear, particularly on Snapchat after 10 seconds, turning it into a symbol of the idea of the disappearance looming over some animal species at risk on the planet. The awareness of the younger audience was such, however, that discussions and initiatives on such topic got out of the Web to be materialized in the real world, independently

5. Jenkins, H., Ford, S., Green, J., *Spreadable Media. Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*, 2013.



Img. 6.9 Official site, Whale Wars series poster and screenshot of Sea Shepherd Conservative Society's Battleship Antarctica documentary.

moulded by the users who also organized micro-events that provided unexpected resonances on sites and actions of publicity carried out independent, reaching 120 million users on Twitter alone.

THE COLLECTIVE JOURNEY

Studies on what some transmedia producers call *collective journey* have not completed their own course yet, but the theoretical



Img. 6.10 #LastSelfie (2015) – WWF. From traditional to transmedia campaign. Visuals on snapchat and general stats.

view and the ultimate goal of their use are already defined. In transmedia environments the collective journey aims at overcoming the narrative paradigm of *The Hero's Journey*. Its habitat is the contemporary media ecosystem, liquid and with less and less reference points. Collective journey is seen from someone as an evolution of transmedial storytelling; from transmedia it draws the ability to make the narrative more striking at a social level and the force required to drive audiences and communities to actively work. Like *The Hero's Journey* and other narrative paradigms, the collective journey is part of the metanarrative of all the humanity and is theorized by Maya Zuckerman on the basis that today we are at the beginning of a new era of knowledge, both from the human, political, philosophical point of view and on global and individual point of view.

The Collective Journey is a non-linear, multiplatform, physical and digital experience and/or story of several diverse people, groups, tribes, cultures, networks, coming together for a higher purpose and a common cause. In their journeys, they move beyond their own individual experiences to a cohesive collective that is both the sum of all individuals and also a new entity entirely. They move between physical interactions in real space, to online digital interactions in cyberspace. Our journeys into outer space, technological advancement, mobile and urban lives, and the Internet, have all created the circumstances for the rise of the

Collective Journey. [...] The Collective Journey can become a tool for social movements, climate change groups, and empower groups to change political narratives in geographical areas. [...] It cannot be a singular narrative, but a convergence of many voices of different genders, ethnicities, ages, and opinions coming together in a non-linear fashion. [...] Most current Collective Journey narratives start with a basis in The Hero's Journey and then jump into a collective narrative. The Hero's Journey is still a linear one. For a true collective narrative experience we need to integrate other platforms, other media that can break the linear pattern and create non-linear, interactive, engaging and immersive experiences. Virtual worlds, augmented worlds, massively multiplayer online games, and other immersive spaces and technologies will hail an era where more collective experiences can emerge.⁶ — *Maya Zuckerman*
– *transmedia producer and media consultant*

Finally, even if the rules of the collective journey are still unpredictable, the mechanism of the use of the paradigm are defined from Maya Zuckerman with this “8 Steps How-to scheme”:

- *Decision*: individuals/archetypes on different levels of self-awareness making a conscious, or at times, unconscious choice to do something together: a journey, a project, or an adventure.
- *Planning*: without planning, individuals cannot come to agreements about what they are doing together.
- *Crossing*: crossing the collective threshold is an event or decision that throws the individuals into the shared experience.
- *Conflicts*: internal and external multifaceted conflicts arise within each individual and in the collective as a group working towards cohesion.
- *Storming*: eye of the storm is the “place” where many individual voices hold to their own narratives, ego, behaviors needs and wants. This phase brings a lot of

6. Zuckerman, M., *The Collective Journey...* cit.

chaos, a lot of noise, but also brings that transition moment.

- *Cohesion*: each individual finds their voice, call and role within the collective.
- *Convergence*: a new fully cohesive group has emerged – the collective. All move as one, and still have space for each individual to be fully expressed.
- *The Gifts to the World*: the collective now working together, superpositioned and powerful, can serve a bigger cause or community.



Img. 6.11 The scheme elaborated by transmedia producer Maya Zuckerman for The Collective Journey.

The range of action of collective journey is still to be calibrated and its ambitions are very strong. Its limit is still that of convincing important players into researching and developing in its field: numerous researchers and pioneers around the world

are exchanging information and case studies, good practices and design models⁷ with the precise aim of accelerating on yet another important frontier of transmedia way in entertainment, in public communication, even in politics and in storytelling for global changes.

If transmedia is the delivery method, then it is made for Collective Journey storytelling. This type of narrative is ideal, because Collective Journey tends to encompass rich story worlds, filled with interconnected people. This is why we are seeing Collective Journey play out so dramatically in real world scenarios, such as Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter, and Brexit. Examples of Collective Journey in entertainment include *Game of Thrones*, *The Walking Dead*, *Orange is the New Black*, and *Westworld*. Each of these is a sprawling story world, operating on a continuum of time (a rich past, a present much of which we are not privy to, and a future that is unpredictable). Each of these worlds involve a number of diverse characters (none of whom is truly a hero) who are challenged by a deeply flawed system. The narrative is driven by how they interact with one another in the face of this challenge. What the socio-political and entertainment-based Collective Journey narratives have in common is that we-the audience have now become participants in the story. In entertainment, clever producers are creating contents that extend across different media, allowing us to interact with these worlds, learn more about them, and share them with others. Social media allows us to speak directly to all of the stakeholders in the property, from the studios down to the actors. We can also speak with one another, complaining about what we don't like, and building big media buzz if we are very much enjoying the story. [...] This is collective narrative in action. — Jeff Gomez – transmedia Producer and CEO, Starlight Runner Entertainment

TRANSMEDIA LITERACY AND EDUCATION

Like all the global revolutions in terms of storytelling, transmedia too has established itself in history thanks to experiences and projects before theorization and development of globally shared standards emerged. To what extent it can be

7. <https://blog.collectivejourney.com>

useful to the learning processes of the future, as much as transmedia literacy can be beneficial to the affirmation of a new *digital humanitas*, it is too early to define.

According to Henry Jenkins, learning through transmedia narratives, students must go hunting their content by collecting information disseminated on different media platforms⁸. However, both interactivity in consultation and interactivity in conversation – topics we have dealt with in the fourth chapter of the book – when applied to storytelling transmedia in the educational and training processes are subject to two different dynamics:

- an *exogenous* one, in the name of which preexisting content is imported “from the outside” for some particular purposes in didactic fields;
- an *endogenous* one, through which the creation of original contributions is aimed at learning through the use of multiple media platforms.

In both cases, the use of Howard Gardner’s “multiple intelligences” intersects pedagogical practice with the three intelligences theorized by Robert J. Sternberg⁹ and Pierre Lévy’s “cosmopedia” (the Knowledge Space), an open knowledge area for the collective intelligences of new digital generations. How can the transmedial narratives affect pedagogical processes, and in particular the methodologies and learning tools of schools, training centers and academia today? The first answer may come from the objectives set out in the *Confronting the Challenge of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century* report, commissioned in 2009 by the American McArthur Foundation¹⁰, which defined, among the new skills of contemporary teaching:

8. Jenkins, H., *Transmedia Education: the 7 principles Revisited*, in: <http://henryjenkins.org>.

9. Robert Sternberg entrusts human learning to three types of basic intelligences: analytical, practical and creative. In: Sternberg, R.J., *Theories of Intelligence*, 1987.

10. Jenkins, H., Purushotma, R., Weigel, M., Clinton, K., Robison, A. J. (ed.), *Confronting the Challenge of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*, 2009.

- *play*, the capacity to experiment with one's surroundings as a form of problem-solving;
- *performance*, the ability to adopt alternative identities for the purpose of improvisation and discovery;
- *simulation*, the ability to interpret and construct dynamic models of real-world processes;
- *appropriation*, the ability to meaningfully sample and remix media content;
- *multitasking*, the ability to scan one's environment and shift focus as needed to salient details;
- *distributed cognition*, the ability to interact meaningfully with tools that expand mental capacities;
- *collective intelligence*, the ability to pool knowledge and compare notes with others toward a common goal;
- *judgement*, the ability to evaluate the reliability and credibility of different information sources;
- *transmedia navigation*, the ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities;
- *networking*, the ability to search for, synthesize, and disseminate information;
- *negotiation*, the ability to travel across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives, receiving and following alternative norms.

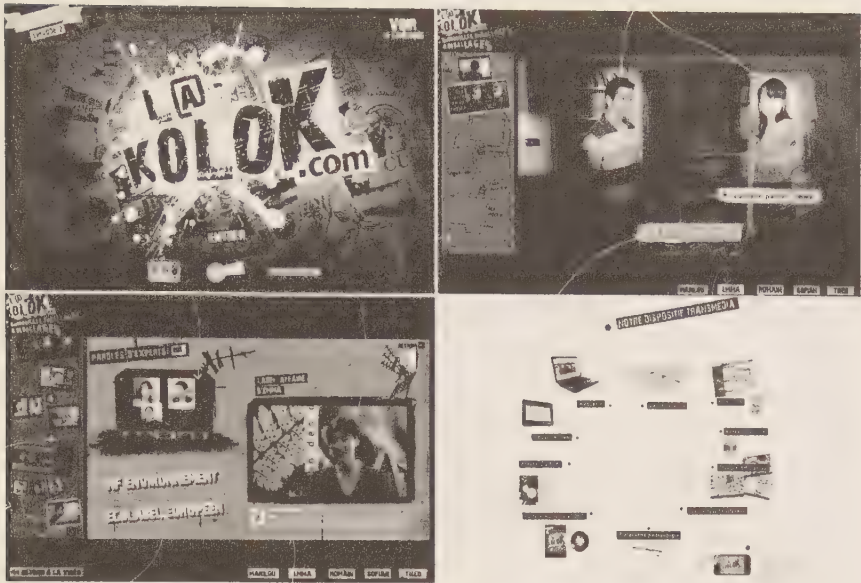
An example? *La-Kolok* is a transmedia project aimed at improving the relationship between teenagers and teens through coexistence, nutrition, respect for social rules, road behavior, tolerance and valorization of diversity. Created by the Paris based Le Vent Tourne factory, *La-Kolok's* story (example of transcoded concept) follows the sequence of events following the first experience of living together by five youth. Launched in November 2012, its communication system provided:

- an interactive webseries in which the audience could influence the story by selecting characters and objects in the scenography;
- a board game on nutrition and healthy living in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and the French National Program for Food;
- an alternate reality game for smartphones;
- profiles on social networks where to find photos, videos, and curiosities about each character's philosophy of life (the salutist, the athlete, the "pilot" ...);
- a web documentary that expanded the imaginary universe of the apartment to the entire La-Kolok.com building, with the possibility to change views to get a deeper insight on multiethnicity;
- a weekly web space showing interviews with experts on the issues raised in each episode;
- an online collaborative platform for educators and teachers, with a School Area where it is possible to download classroom contents that can be used for classroom lessons.

With *La-Kolok* learning was very natural, also thanks to the interaction with a transmedia communication systems rich with content, artwork, and experiences presented through 'affinity spaces', interpreted in a peer-to-peer view and an informal way¹¹. In such environment literacy processes were developed, actions that should be considered in all respects social abilities in terms of interpersonal relationships as well as the voluntary expression of individuals and groups, both inside and outside the school, the institutions of study and of research. An example here too?

The first case of transmedia storytelling applied to the valorization of the didactic activity of a museum was that of

11. Gee, J.P., *Semiotic Social Spaces...* cit., pp. 214-232.



Img. 6.12 La-Kolok.com (2012). Webseries, interviews with experts and transmedial communication system.

umigo (yoU Make It GO), a transmedia project created in 2012 by the *Ready to Learn* TV show with the supervision of the US State Department for Education and launched by the Children's Museum in Manhattan, New York. A project aimed at children aged 6 to 8, involved in playing experiences and actions, made easier by their most congenial languages (music, physical performance, play), in order to facilitate their approach to applied sciences and technologies through creating and sharing interactive content.

The virtual environment set up in the museum was enriched by an app, cartoons, books and board games. All activities were also geared directly to digital transfer and classroom use, creating an educational continuum that was later successfully adopted by the Children's Museum of various US states, from Maine to Tennessee, from Louisiana to California.



Img. 6.13 Umigo (2012). Character and session at the Children's Museum in Manhattan. Bottom, animated series at app.

The transmedia experiences aimed at the development of specific skills and activities in teaching and education are also based on:

- *spreadability* (to search out information across the broadest possible ground);
- *multiplicity* (which encourages us to think about multiple versions – possible alternatives to the established canon);
- *subjectivity* (to look at the same events from multiple points of view, and express individual opinions in groups of interests);
- *hypersociability*¹² (the ability to create relations based on relationships created and consolidated solely in digital worlds);

12. Ito, M., *Technologies of the Childhood Imagination: Yugioh, Media and Everyday Cultural Production*, in: Karaganis, J., Jeremijenko, N. (ed.), *Network/Netplay: Structures of Participation in Digital Culture*, 2005.

- *multimodality*¹³ (the ability to decode texts and portions of content using multiple languages – textual, visual, musical, spatial, etc. – in the process of acquisition and sharing of knowledge).

A fitting example in this case is that of a network of museums transformed into a transmedia learning platform both in the real world and in digital environments by the Danish interaction designer Asta Wellejus in 2014. *ICE (Interactive Culture Explorers)* consisted of a series of interactive projects where different Funen cultural institutions worked together to create new learning experiences for children and youth focusing on arts and culture. Cultural Region Funen had set a framework where people from educational and game industry worked together to create digital art and culture projects targeting respectively the 7-10 year olds and 12-16 year olds. Ten municipalities on Funen and the Ministry of Culture asked The Asta Experience to involve eight arts and cultural institutions in creating three types of project and experience exists in *ICE*, including interactive formats for exhibition, indoor and outdoor. For example the grave of the *Viking King*, an augmented exploration experience about myth and facts of the Viking age, or *Pythagoras Key*, a game of architecture and mathematics. Or the *ArtMix* to work on the basic rules of composition, theory of color and perspective, or the *Artmobile*, a 6 meter long interactive installation where the audience experienced and experimented with the meeting of music words and visual art. 5 of the 6 projects are apps, and all had gaming elements and structures weaved into the cultural heritage experience. Plus, a collaboration between Odense Central Library, Odense Symphony Orchestra and BRANDTS with a portable installation which could be seen at institutions and go on tour in the whole county. The two goals of the project were:

- *flexible communication* (physical cultural experiences/ learning tools and tasks/individual immersion);

13. Kress, G., *Literacy in the New Media Age*, 2003.

- *modern learning* (differentiated teaching/forms of expression that responds to different learning styles/ability to manage learning, time and experience individually/ability to strengthening the students' digital imaging and media literacy).¹⁴

For similar purposes, even if with completely different modes, I shall describe a final personal project.

Looking for Walter has been the first *transmedia experiential learning project* realized in Italy. On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Italian Disney's Magazine "Topolino", we sent two handmade dolls to students of two different classes in two different Italian cities, one in the middle and one in the northern part of the country. In a hidden pocket on the back of the dolls we put a small piece of paper with a short message. A conundrum. Nothing more. What to do, and why. Who represented the dolls? Why were they there? And the students of each class didn't know anything about the other students... This was the rabbit hole of the project, and these the rules of its story world: 50 students, 10 teachers, 20 runners, 2 handmade dolls and 11.000 km to be covered in 20 days using digital media and real world experiences without spending a single euro. The concept was a transcoded one, mixing urban quests and alternate reality games. The goal? Find the mysterious owner of the two toys – representing Walt Disney and his daughter, Diane – and share creative artworks and educational contents. Carried out from April to May 2013, *Looking for Walter* asked students to solve tricky enigmas and explore their country managing six different disciplines (literature and fiction, maths, art history, media studies, English and sciences) in order to succeed. Human relationships, positive emotions, good skills and media activism were the crafts of the quest, shared online on the official website of the project. And since the students succeeded, at the end... Diane Disney entered the scene, receiving the dolls and keeping

14. <http://www.dicasta.dk/>

them for ever in the wonderful museum created in honor of her father: The Walt Disney Family Museum in San Francisco!



Img. 6.14 Looking for Walter (2013). The dolls, the website, the museum and the final goal of the experiential learning project.

Based on the multimodality and new creative, technical and processing skills of the first native transmedia generation, *Looking for Walter* was inspired by a 2012 educational project called *Robot Heart Stories*¹⁵ produced by narrator Lance Weiler, director of the Digital Storytelling Lab at Columbia University, New York, who in 2016 created another example of educational transmedia storytelling entitled: *Sherlock Holmes & the Internet of Things*. An ongoing prototype that explored new forms and functions of storytelling in an open R&D space that experimented with shifts in authorship and ownership of stories. The experiment used a detective narrative to examine the policy and ethical issues surrounding the Internet of Things (IoT). The goal of *Sherlock Holmes & the Internet of Things* was to build a massive connected crime scene consisting of smart storytelling objects. Teams of participants from all over the world created,

15. In *Robot Heart Stories* (2012), the goal of the project was to “get home” the Lyka robot, crashed by mistake in Canada, starting from the United States through the help of children and students. At the end of his adventure (2000 miles), Lyka would carry with her all the words (7.000) and the emotional experiences (800) shared with the kids during her stay on Earth (<http://www.lanceweiler.com/>).

designed, built and tested prototypes that were plugged into a number of crime scene locations. At the heart of the experience was the *MOOC* – *massive online/offline collaboration*. Storytellers, game designers, makers, hackers and Sherlock Holmes fans came together to reimagine the work of Arthur C. Doyle. And over 1.200 people applied for the MOOC from 60 different countries.¹⁶

If these last two examples, along with all other small or big projects, independent or at an industrial level, will be the stepping stones of a worldwide pedagogical revolution or of the first steps humanity is making towards a new transmedial teaching, time will tell. In the meantime, there are many new collaborative storytelling projects emerging in universities, schools, events and museums all over the world, ready to experiment and over time to state new transmedial modes in learning and public and private teaching. And that is a fact.

WORKSHOP 6 – TRANSMEDIA FOR SOCIAL CHANGES

Choose one of the techniques described in this chapter and adapt it to the transmedia project you have in mind, in a charity or humanitarian context. Carefully evaluate the theme and make it the center of your story. Analyze the social and technological context in which to apply it and attempt to adapt it to the canvas elaborated by Lina Srivastava. Then try it with a focus group of at least 50 people and over 5 days in order to assess its impact, even if in a simple simulation. At the end, check the mechanisms you put in place and reconsider them by making adjustments in terms of communication and the strategies activated.

16. <http://2016.sherlockholmes.io>



Img. 6.15 Sherlock Holmes and the Internet of Things (2016). The website, the collaborative platforms and one of the crime scenes of the project.

APPENDIX

TRANSMEDIA PRODUCERS TOOLKIT

To present an investor, a technological, editorial or marketing partner, or to a licensee with your project, or to document the results of a transmedia project, there are three different types of documents:

- the *franchise universe mythology document* (FUMD), which mainly deals with the descriptive aspects, market researches, editorial suggestions, all the narrative and its imaginative universe and story world;
- the *transmedia 'bible'*: it is similar to that used for TV serials but in this case comprehensive of all the variations of the story used in the platforms involved and particularly concentrates on narrative devices, characters, plots, subplots and so forth;
- the *project reference document*, which stores and documents all the aspects concerning the project: creative, narrative, managerial, productive, technological, promotional and communication.

All of these three documents obviously share common parts, especially in initial and strategic sections, whose aim is to define the general content and the platforms involved into the communication project. More specifically, while the project reference document is used by all departments involved in the asset of any project, the 'bible' is a tool compiled solely for the benefit of the authors of the different platforms and in the case of serial narratives, and the FUMD is specifically devoted to defining a precise, inspiring mythology of the transmedia project and it is particularly useful for the launch and the promotions of both franchise and intellectual properties (IP).

Since in the first two chapters we have focused mainly on experiences connected to the world of entertainment and in the last two we have taken an in depth journey mainly on narratives connected to brands, art and

social issues, I have decided to take into examination the *project reference document* because it represents the most complex and adaptable case for projects of different nature and, as a consequence, the tool that can best meet with the needs of an ever growing number of authors and readers. Before moving to deal with PRD though, it is necessary to state one last premise on the production workflow of transmedia project, an issue we have already investigated on in its basic procedures in chapter four.

TRANSMEDIA PROJECT WORKFLOW

In order to best design, rule and control the whole of the creative, technological and industrial processes of a transmedia project, let us take a look at its overall pipeline, that is the complex of actions necessary to start it up, as it is described in the transmedia project workflow. The TPW outlines all the creative and executive steps of a narrative developed on different media: following its steps, the transmedia producer can move from the definition of the basic idea to the actual development of the project, plans the design for its communication system, as well as the modalities of content experience consumption, their 'packaging' for the project's multiple audiences.

The first step to be taken in a workflow is that of the *definition* of the project. All of the factors concerning the idea and the creation of the story worlds to be activated within the imaginative universe are to be evaluated one by one: its goals, the story theme and the elements one reckons to be crucial in order to identify one's target audience. What follows is the search for examples, business cases and statistic data akin to our project which are already on the market. This is important to formulate proposals for possible sponsorships and partnership to be activated. Eventually, the team (professionals and the different companies) that are to work on the creation and the production of content are to be defined with accuracy. The second step of the workflow – and here we enter the competences of production – concerns development, starting from its dramaturgical features (defining and analyzing concept, synopsis, plot, subplot and characters) and its operational features (for example defining artistic and technical cast). Then the design is defined (from art direction to graphic layouts and aesthetic features of content and experiences), before focusing on the technological development and the economic structure of the project (from the definition of the business model to the creation of licensing agreements, and, more generally, the legal and operative definition about intellectual property).

Third step of the workflow is the design of the communication system, with its territorial features (language and cross-culture), its structure (definition of the rabbit hole and of the points of entry, of the touchpoints and bridges; definition of the assets to be part of the system, selection of the technological platforms), definition of the calls of actions interactivity and the different variations of the narrative are going to need. Eventually, the definition of

the transmedia roll out and the platform action chart are to be made. Then the fourth step, *distribution*, ranging from the creation and the publication of contents to the narrative implementation and the testing of the communication system, to the actions of promotion (from audience building strategies to launch, from marketing campaign to traditional and viral advertising, from publicity to community management), to finally the progress monitoring actions on content distributed (for the time being only those supervised by the production). Fifth and last step of the productive workflow of a transmedia project is the final *wrap*, ranging from content packaging to their dissemination, and all the final assessment and quality control actions (both from the audience's point of view and from that of the partners and sponsors this time).

At the end of the study of our workflow the basic structure of the transmedia producer's work is complete. From here on we will have to move to the phase of contacts and relations, that of contracts and assignments. We will have to move from the creative and speculative moment to the productive and executive. At this stage an 'informal' and yet crucial action for the project to start shall represent the great divide between these two moments: the creation of a network of companies, partners, sponsors, institution and the scouting of the necessary professionals to allow the project to have a solid existence. As transmedia producers you shall not always be directly involved in this passage, therefore it would be best to consult other essays on the topic¹. Yet, to possess a comprehensive knowledge of all the aspects regarding a project, also those not directly related to the creative sphere is a crucial matter. I am talking about regulations on rights and intellectual property, legal and commercial agreements, duration and typology of the contracts of the most important professionals, and so forth... These information too are important in order to produce the final synthetic document on the transmedia storyteller/producer/designer: the *project reference document*, an operational 'guide' of the project, essential at the moment of its presentation on the market and for the official engagement of partners and contracted professionals.

PROJECT REFERENCE DOCUMENT

The *project reference document* displays and provides a deeper insight on all the essential steps necessary to produce a transmedia project. There is no fixed length to it and in its six sections may also contain attachments of a very heterogeneous nature, such as market researches, visuals of previous experiences, graphic proposals or contract drafts. Each agency or studio uses its own reference format, modifying it the way it best suits to them. We shall here take into examination the most essential and complete form of PRD at the same time.

1. Bernardo, B., *The Producer's Guide to Transmedia* (2011) and Acuna, F., Caloguerea, A., *Guía para la producción y distribución de contenidos transmedia para múltiples plataformas* (2012).

1. General Data

- 1.1 Company Data
- 1.2 Project title and short synopsis
- 1.3 Theme/Concept
- 1.4 Genre and Formats
- 1.5 Target
- 1.6 Positioning
- 1.7 Transmedia Bouquet

2. Editorial Data

- 2.1 Imaginative Universe
 - Nebula
 - Universe Mythology
 - Maps
- 2.2 Story world
- 2.3 Plot and subplot
- 2.4 Characters
 - Bio
 - Profiles/Sketches
 - Grid portraying relationships between characters
- 2.5 Location (Real/Virtual)
- 2.6 Loglines and synopses (whether it is a serial product or articulated in several episodes)
- 2.7 Structure of the narrative
 - Movie – Content and experiences
 - TV – Content and experiences
 - Web – Content and experiences
 - Mobile – Content and experiences
 - Gaming – Content and experiences
 - Real World – Content and experiences
 - Other platforms – Content and experiences

3. Design

- 3.1 Art Direction (shaping, colors, lettering, wording and design)
- 3.2 Layouts, Wireframes, Sketches
- 3.3 The Communicative System
 - Platform Selection Layout
 - Rabbit Hole and Points of Entry
 - Touch Points and Bridges
 - Affinity Spaces
- 3.4 Transmedia Roll Out

4. Production Data

- 4.1 Business model
- 4.2 Partnership
- 4.3 Sponsorship
- 4.4 Licensing and Copyright
- 4.5 Languages and geographical differentiation of the project
- 4.6 Transmedia production plan
- 4.7 Production Testing

5. Promotion Data

- 5.1 Actions of Launch and Audience Building
- 5.2 Co-marketing and Promotions
- 5.3 Merchandise
- 5.4 Advertising
- 5.5 Media Selection Strategy
- 5.6 Publicity & Dissemination
- 5.7 Community management
- 5.8 Territorial Activities

6. Assessment and Control

- 6.1 Analytics Framework
- 6.2 Editorial Feedback and Actions
- 6.3 Productive Feedback and Actions
- 6.4 Technological Feedback and Actions
- 6.5 Users Feedback and Actions
- 6.6 Institutional Feedback and Actions
- 6.7 Private Partners Feedback and Actions

The reader at this stage is almost certainly familiar with all the definitions and the actions in this list, while for other definitions a few more details should be given. Also, since I am also frequently asked 'how do you do' a transmedia project presentation I have chosen to display some points of the PRD through images taken from project I have described and told in this book and others which I have not, with the mere aim of provide further examples. Those project are very different from one another and are focused on the three main goals the writing of a project reference document has, that is:

- the conclusive presentation of an idea or a project;
- the scouting for partners and sponsors;
- the regeneration or the conquest of a new positioning of an already existing project.

The projects I have chosen are the book-game *The secret message of the fallen stars* (Cap. 4), the movie *Monitor* (Cap. 4) and the two series *Monster Caffè*

(Cap. 1) and *MU* (Cap. 6), two which I have added the planning of transmedia experiences for the launch of the independent videogame *True Foe*, a medical thriller created by independent Italian studio Atlantic Studios in 2016.

GENERAL DATA

Company Data / Project title and short synopsis / Theme and Concept / Genre and Formats / Target and Positioning / Transmedia Bouquet.

Just like any editorial project, also transmedia project must be described and communicated using the traditional parameters of the marked assets on which their content are based. Identifying target, positioning, productive formats, narrative genre and concept of the tale is indispensable, particularly to have a clear picture of who the referent is right from the beginning, and focus on:

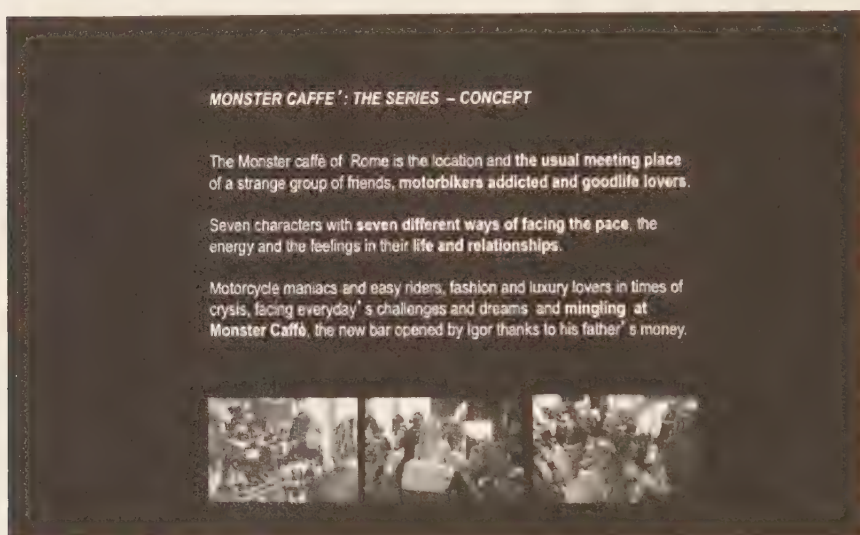
- the basic nature of the primary and secondary assets of the story;
- the reference target of the purpose.

Differently from traditional communication and production projects, it must be also noted how:

- concerning the narrative genre of reference, all those which (both genre and subgenre) were tested in the communication system must be expressed unambiguously;
- concerning the target, both the primary and the secondary sub targets (when present) shall have to be mentioned in their different developments in the media involved in the project;
- concerning positioning, both the 'horizontal' (the project in its market) and the 'vertical' (the project with respect to the other carried out in the same production and the others who gravitate around the same market segment) must be mentioned.



Img. A.1 MU (2017). Cover and Target (unique, since the project was based on a supporting communicative system).

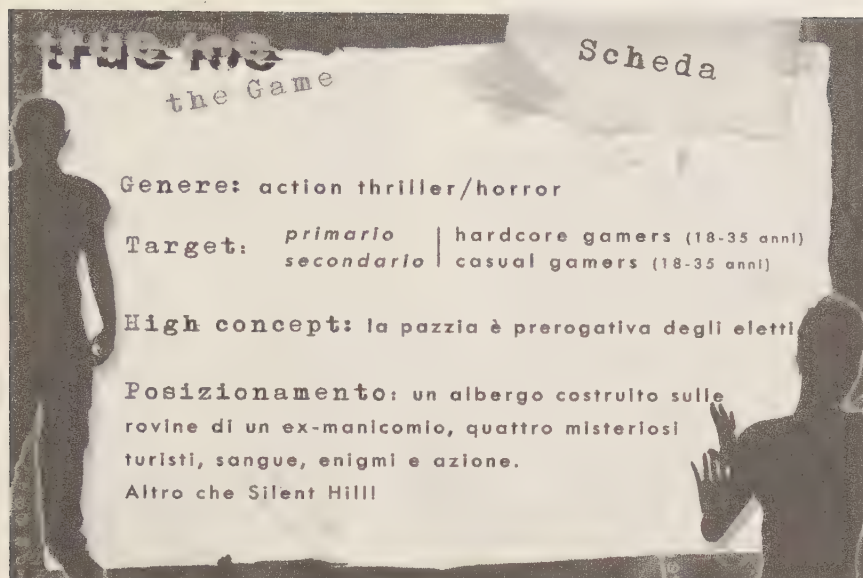


Img. A.2 Monster Caffé (2012): Concept of the series, canon of the transmedia universe.

EDITORIAL DATA

Imaginative Universe / Story world / Plot and subplot / Characters / Bio and Grid with relationships / Location (Real/Virtual) / Loglines and synopsis / Platforms: artwork and experiences.

The points listed in the above editorial section of the PRD have been almost completely dealt with in the previous chapters, and since this is probably the most narrative, 'written down' part of all the document sections, it can be

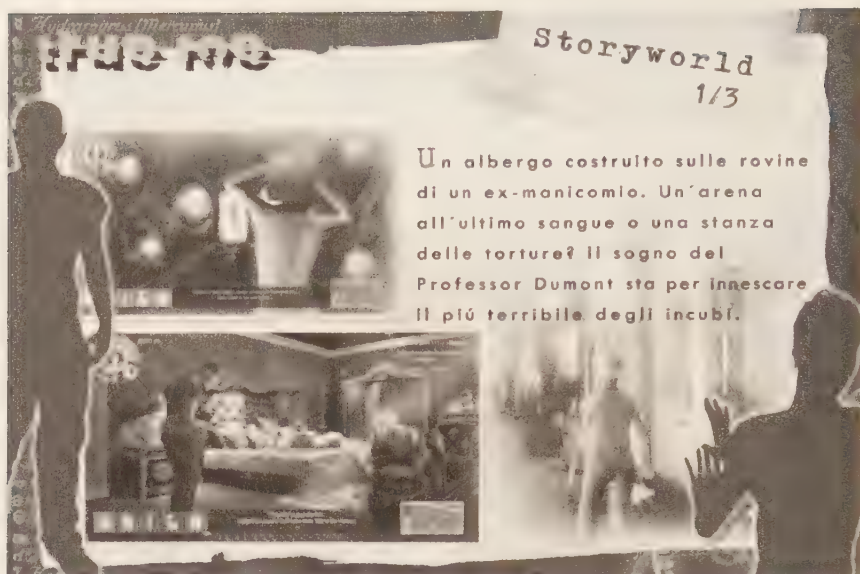


Img. A.3 True Foe (2014): Target and Positioning of the videogame, mothership of the transmedia project.

useful to linger a little bit more on and give a few tips on 'how to' write a PRD, that is to say being focused on:

- writing simple sentences, paratactic, effective and lively;
- articulate your discourse in short paragraphs, short and comprehensive sentences openly addressed to the addressee of the document (specialized, not generic);
- use your adjectives with the specific aim of producing the wanted effect, an accurate rhetoric structure and limit the technicalities from the different fields to the strict necessary (in order not to cut off any department which will read the document) and, in case, provide footnotes;
- use maps and frameworks in order to facilitate and accelerate the reader's learning.

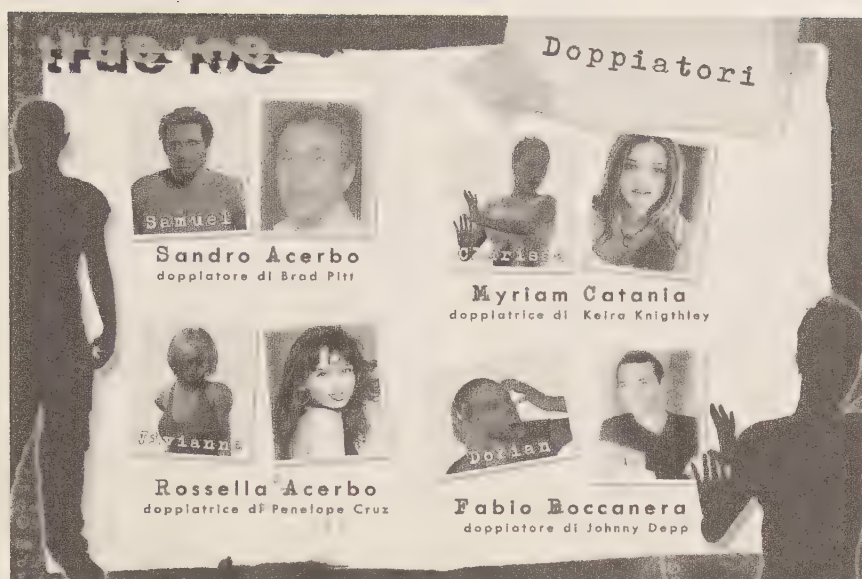
As an example, I put here some images taken from PRDs of different projects:



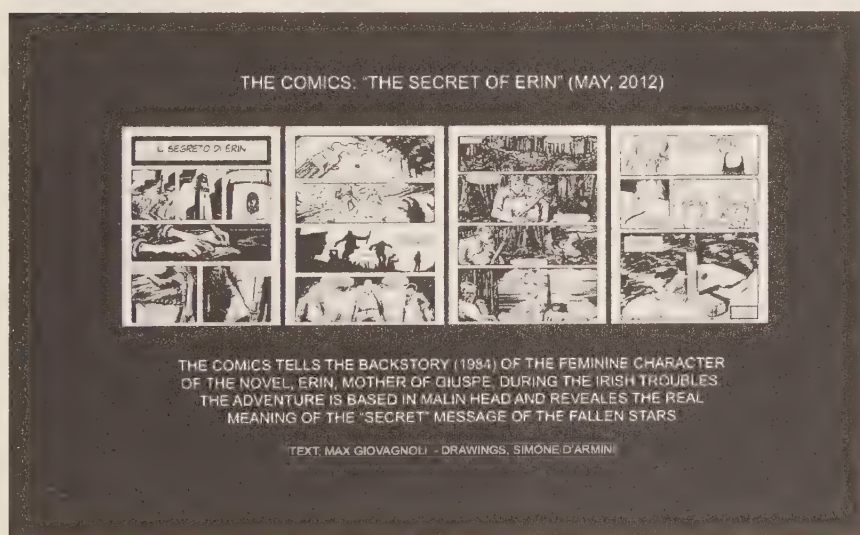
Img. A.4 True Foe (2014). Story world of the game (1/3), with visuals.



Img. A.5 Monster Caffè (2012): Characters of the series (2/2).



Img. A.6 True Friend (2014). Cast and dubbers of the video game (simulation).

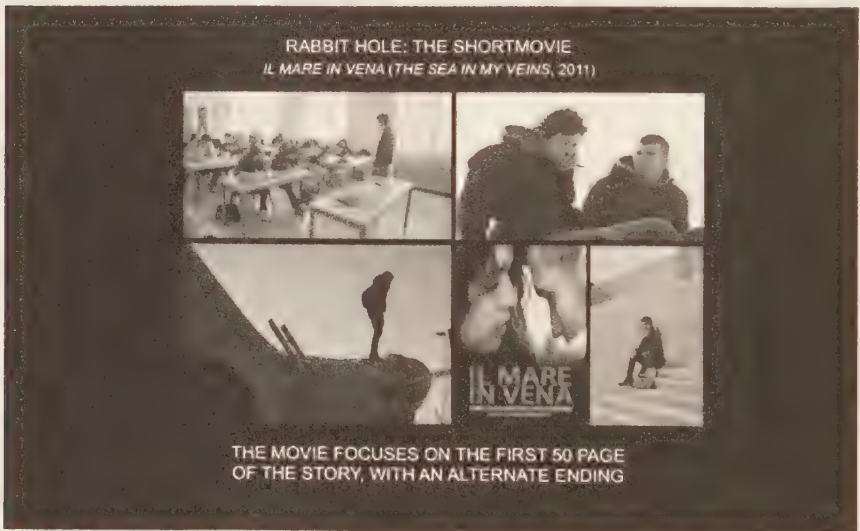


Img. A.7 The secret message of the fallen stars (2012). Comics asset of the transmedia project.

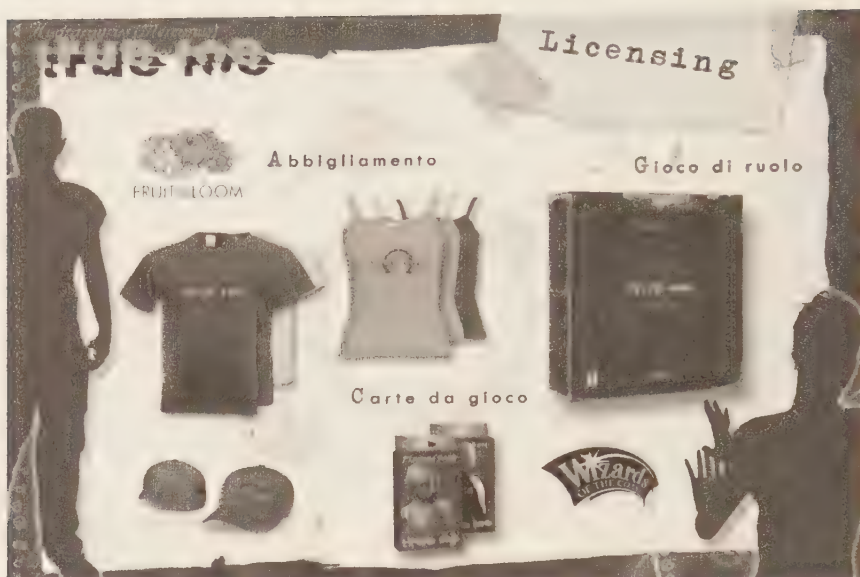
DESIGN

Art Direction / Layouts, Wireframes, Sketches / The Communicative System / Platform Selection Layout / Rabbit Hole and Points of Entry / Touch Points and Bridges / Affinity Spaces / Transmedia Roll Out.

The section devoted to design is certainly the most articulated and non authentic of the PRD. It contains materials of different nature, the result of the creative work carried out when the transmedia workflow was in its phase of definition. As the image below clearly show, images also in this case drawn from different projects, the action of planning the production plans of content and experiences to be implemented on different media is a very complex operation indeed and must be structured on more levels. The clues to be included in this section are solely those necessary to the figures responsible for the editorial department to clearly see the interaction spaces, business models, the economic balances and the productive strategies to be implemented during the course of the project. This is the reason why we will include *platform action chart* and *transmedia roll out* of the project precisely in this section.



Img. A.8 The secret message of the fallen stars (2012). The Short Movie: The sea in my veins, rabbit hole of the transmedia project.



Img. A.10 True Foe (2014). Licensing: role playing games, merchandise and gadgets (simulation).

specific target. Therefore, among the activities this section of the documents investigates in an in depth fashion there are the production activities, such as advertising, the strategic, such as *media selection strategy* – aiming at finding priority partners and addresses to whom communicate the project, or the media plan – which gives indications on the different spaces to purchase in order to provide visibility on the different media of a campaign.

In terms of diachrony, this section of the PRD eventually includes the activities to be implemented from the brand's launch to its release on the market and its memorization, with actions of marketing and local promotion both in the real and in the digital world (contests, virtual tours and so on...).

ASSESSMENT AND CONTROL

Analytics Framework / Editorial Feedback and Actions / Productive Feedback and Actions / Technological Feedback and Actions / Users Feedback and Actions / Institutional Feedback and Actions / Private Partners Feedback and Actions.

The usefulness of a section dedicated to monitoring the contents and the audiences of a transmedia narrative is without the shadow of a doubt crucial.



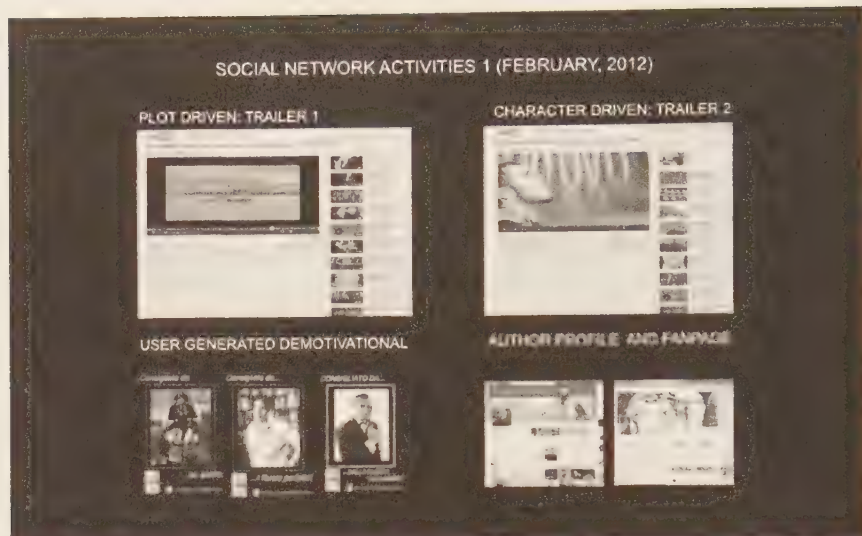
Copyright: Max Gervignoni / Cross-media.it

Img. A.11 MU (2017). Merchandise: clothes, accessories, schoolkit and gadgets.

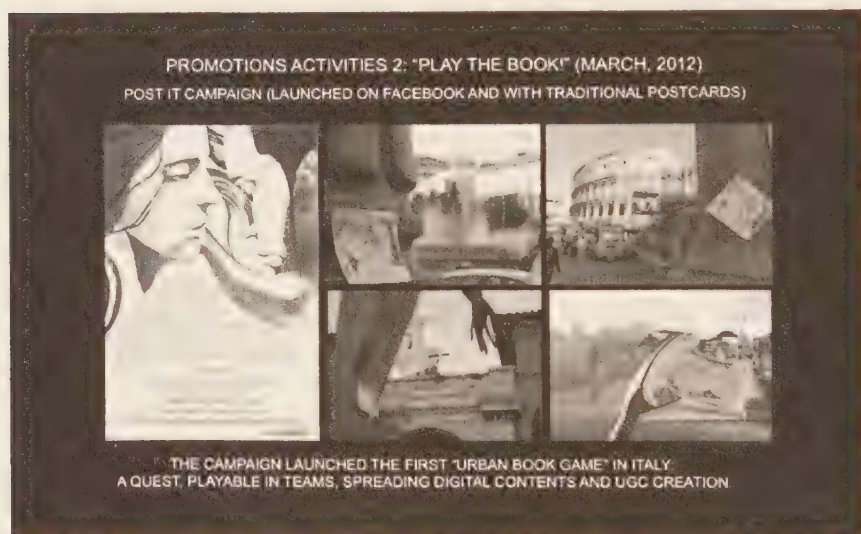
Communicative systems are similar to osmotic organisms, very easy to be permeated from the outside, very difficult to be changed from the inside. Each change puts the overall balance of communication and narration on different platforms at jeopardy. The mechanism which must be provided for in order to control those propulsive dynamics which might endanger the solidity of a project works on three intervention mechanisms:

- the presence of tools for the analysis of real time data;
- the presence of media systems especially devoted to it;
- the presence of editorial and technological spaces that might allow an 'in progress' changes of direction for the project.

Each platform of the communication system must be provided with their own detection and control tools. Most often these are proprietary platforms belonging to companies which are involved in the production or are sector partners. The activities shall be activated at the beginning of the project and periodically replicated at different times in the life and the duration of the narrative in the 'multiple media.'



Img. A.12 The secret message of the fallen stars (2012). Social Network Strategies: character driven and plot driven on Facebook.



Img. A.13 The secret message of the fallen stars (2012). Promotional campaign: urban game presented by post.it dissemination in Rome.

Once this section too has been completed, the project reference project is ready and will become to all the extents an indispensable *canovaccio* and a walking path never to be abandoned. It is for this precise reason that, at the

end of the project, it is important to carefully analyze it and transform it into an accurate and well documented case study to reaffirm and communicate our role, our work method and project style to the international market, exactly how we have done together during the course of this short, galactic journey on the transmedia way.

CONCLUSIONS

CHRONICLES FROM THE END OF THE PATH

As the end of the journey is getting near, we inevitably start to feel lonely, to look at the new perspective we have acquired thanks to the people we've met, the ups and downs and experiences we have lived together as the one possible perspective. As we look back the memories which had piled up so quickly seems to be stuffed inside us, so fragile, almost impossible to tell... That is generally the moment we decide to transform them into a story, to push all that beyond ourselves, like a stone thrown into a lake, to be sure it stays there, possibly forever. And once in a while from that momentary boost of narrative a worldwide success may result, just like those we have dealt with in this book. The outcome of case, a magic, the imaginative force of a story world is collected to trigger an uncontrollable energy which, through the pathemic involvement of the audience, dips its roots down into the soil to sprout everywhere, like a virus, in different spots of the planet.¹

A transmedia narrative works exactly the same. Initially it attracts everything on it like a gigantic magnetic field of a black hole. Then, suddenly, it slash a gap open in the media and, with an unpredictable shockwave, pretty much like the shriek calls the sperm whales use to knock giant squids out thousands of meters below the surface of the sea, in a second goes round and round the world. Then suddenly, again, it disappears: only shining waters and a mirror of menacing bubbles on the surface

1. On "pathemic involvement" of the public as a real product and virtual projection through sharing and media consumption, Ref. to: J. Baudrillard, *Il sistema degli oggetti*, 2006.

remain to be the reminder of the story. Is it not that evanescence a trick too? Just an illusion?

Truth and fiction merge into each other more often than ever before in this dramaturgical continuum where the new 'comeback of orality' of the transmedia generation. The stories that make *today's* collective imagery often tend to serialization, remediation, and in doing so they rap their audiences in what I call *sponging effect*, where the apparent disappearance of a narrative from our rational memory coincides with, on the contrary, its embodiment both with the skeleton and in the emotional mind. Just like a sponge first rubbed on a freshly painted wall and, after days, on a white sheet of paper. This is exactly what is happening. These new form of regaining ownership of our own narratives which, exponentially reproduced by transmedia, make authors and audience group together all over the world. And this is happening to us too, is it not?

While I am writing these lines I have just finished the transmedia launch of a fantasy movie, I have brainstormed on an animated series on Leonardo Da Vinci, I am finishing a novel set among the whalers in Iceland and, on the plane, have written an article for a network of professionals from Buenos Aires who are interested in the forms of storytelling I have dealt with in this book. 'Surfing' on different stories and working on more narrative universes at the same time is not a form of compulsion, or homogenization of the story; rather it is the transmedia designer and producer's daily bread. This is what – above all other things – each author who really want to start walking the transmedia way should be aware of. So that he or she gets used in time. So that she or he will not feel betrayed or emptied at some stage in her or his career. So that he or she shall always be ready, when their time comes, to absorb the energy of a narrative and amplify it through communication systems which can involve their audiences deep down their own souls. Because at the end of the day that is what this is all about, from story to story:

intertwining imageries, narrative techniques, forms of consumption and innovative experiences to enter *differently* the world of characters who live in narratives up to their neck. Like ours, their pockets full of incomprehensible jottings and scribbles and with very complex universes to be saved. Their hearts brimming with thousands secrets, their desktops crammed like thick jungles, their throats burning with a damn thirst for stories.

FINALE

THE FASTEST HUNK OF JUNK IN THE GALAXY

Have you ever been on a corellian YT-1300f ship , in your life? Oh, milky way! With his Class 0.5 hyperdrive it could attain 0.5 past lightspeed and make the Kessel Run in less than twelve parsecs! And yes... even Lando still calls it a “hunk of junk” and Leia “that thing”, it is still the fastest ship of the fleet and there’s no game with any imperial hunters!

The owners of that ship upgraded time to time every system of its chassis, customized the weapons and the shields, arranged its front facing mandibles and its transparisteel cockpit according to their personal needing (and commitments), and soon the freighter ended up becoming a unique, iconic, undestroyable myth. The perfect vessel for metanarrators and poachers, for the wildest bastards and the most honorable Rebels’ general of the universe. A cove and a home. The place where it all began. This is the reason why I have chosen the Millennium Falcon to metaphorically stand on the cover of the book, and to end these pages.

Because ‘that thing’ has quite the same age of transmedia and is the perfect icon ever for the “transmedia journey”: flexible, rapid, surprising, able to access all the system and the stations in the galaxy. And its hull, as the gut of the white whale, can contain all the stories of the world. Mix all the media channels. Interfere with every communicative system in the universe. Bring you where the battle is blowing, or faraway in the inner space. Fight the (black) death or try to do all its best to keep the universe in ours hands. All these perspectives points fit and indirectly

evoke what my beloved friend Henry Jenkins, the master which started this path and the first researcher mentioned in these pages, called the final “transmedia logics”¹. Individual, heroic, collective, futuristic but contemporary. Our point of arrival. And now?

Which will be your route through the stars? You are on board now. Ready to recognize your own path and to walk the transmedia way. It’s your moment. And I can only wish you a safe trip, enjoy your flight and live with the maximum intensity ever, all the successes and the failures of your career. If you didn’t quit and you arrived until this point of the book, I’m sure you can face the challenge. So, go on and move fast. The stars are shining for you.

Now you must unlearn what you have learnt.

Difficult to see. Always in motion the future is. – Master Yoda

1. Henry Jenkins, in: Zeiser, A., *Transmedia marketing...* cit., p. 28 says: “My earliest writing was focused on transmedia storytelling [...]. More recently, I have found myself focused on transmedia learning, transmedia branding, transmedia activism/mobilization, transmedia journalism, transmedia performances etc. I would now argue that we should think about multiple transmedia logics, with the possibility of any given project mixing and matching these logics”.

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Max Giovagnoli

Transmedia Way

The Storytellers, Communicators
and Designers' Guide to the Galaxy

This book is an essay and a professional guide at the same time. It consists of all the most important masterworks and experiences, and is a "captain's log" with 100 examples of the most relevant and original transmedia universes invented over the past years, from America to Europe, from Asia to Africa and Australia.

The discussion is endorsed by the presence of first rated professionals and academics who list among the most important international producers, authors and scholars in transmedia history. *Angry Birds* and the Marvel Cinematic Universe, *Mr. Robot* and *Games of Thrones*, *The Dark Knight*, *Westworld* and *Hunger Games*, *Avatar*, and *Assassin's Creed*, *LOST* and *Prometheus*, *Sin City*, *Mad Man* and *Halo*, *Dexter* and *Star Wars* or brands like BMW and Burberry, Chanel and LEGO, HBO and Coke, IKEA, Harley Davidson and Discovery Channel.

What do these gigantic narratives have in common? Making transmedia means creating complex imaginative universes for stories distributed on different media platforms, spreading multilayered plots and managing complex characters for entertainment, information and communications, for brand and public institutions, for cultural heritage and the Arts, for education and for goods.



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